



Arts & Culture Plan

2025 – 2035

We Grow from Deep Roots

**TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITIES • ART**
through the power of arts and culture

SEI READI

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December 9, 2025

Letter to the Region,

We are excited to share the SEI READI Region Arts & Culture Plan. This shared vision and framework, designed to strengthen and celebrate the creativity, cultural heritage, and natural beauty of Southeast Indiana, reflects how we grow from deep roots and work together to shape a vibrant future that we can all celebrate.

Over the past year, over 230 residents, artists, community leaders, and partners shared their ideas and hopes for the future through surveys, interviews, and conversations. Together, we identified almost 400 arts, culture, and history assets and 153 pieces of public art – revealing an extraordinary range of creativity, history, and innovation across the region. Through this work, we built new relationships, discovered shared goals, connected across sectors, and found ourselves collaborating in ways that reflect the unique spirit of Southeast Indiana: neighborly, resourceful, deeply rooted, and future focused.

Southeast Indiana's story is one of rich cultural heritage shaped by river communities, historic towns, and landscapes that have long inspired makers, storytellers, and entrepreneurs. Our region's natural resources – from the Ohio River and rolling hills to parks, trails, and farmland – provide not only scenic beauty but a powerful sense of place that fuels creativity and strengthens community bonds. Here, we grow from deep roots, from traditions handed down through generations, from the land that has sustained us, and from the enduring pride of people who continue to shape the region with their hands, hearts, and artistry.

We are excited to see the plan's goals and strategies come to life – strengthening next-generation attachment, activating our downtowns, supporting creative talent, and aligning sectors and leaders to move the region forward. This is not a plan to sit on a shelf, but a living, flexible framework for counties, cities, and communities to use in many ways – from local planning and economic development to tourism, education, and civic engagement. It reflects a true team effort – arts, culture, civic, and economic partners working together to create meaningful and lasting impact.

We look forward to bringing this plan to life by ***nurturing relationships, igniting creativity, and shaping a vibrant future for the SEI READI Region – because from deep roots, great things flourish.***

Sincerely,

Mary McCarty
SEI READI
mary.mccarty@sirpc.org

Jon Bond
Switzerland County

Olivia Chewning
Union County

Gary Norman
Ripley County

Mike Northcutt
Ohio County

John Palmer
Franklin County

Mike Perleberg
Dearborn County

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
WELCOME	11
The Project	12
The Plan	13
THE REGION	17
Southeast, IN	18
State of the Arts	23
Defining Success	31
Goals & Strategies	33
The BIG Ideas	52
Call to Action	61
THE COUNTIES	65
Introduction	66
Dearborn County	67
Franklin County	73
Ohio County	79
Ripley County	85
Switzerland County	91
Union County	97
THE TOOLKIT	103
Introduction	104
A. Ideas & Inspiration	105
B. Project Funding	112
C. Data & Advocacy	113
D. Glossary	116
APPENDIX	117
A. Data Tables	118
B. Methodology	128
Acknowledgements	136



Still Pointe Art Studio & Gallery, Rising Sun

The background of the slide is a vibrant, abstract painting with thick brushstrokes in various colors including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and pink. A large, semi-transparent white rectangle is centered over the painting, serving as a backdrop for the text.

Arts & Culture Plan

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**



Arts & Culture Plan

2025 – 2035 : Executive Summary

We Grow from Deep Roots

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

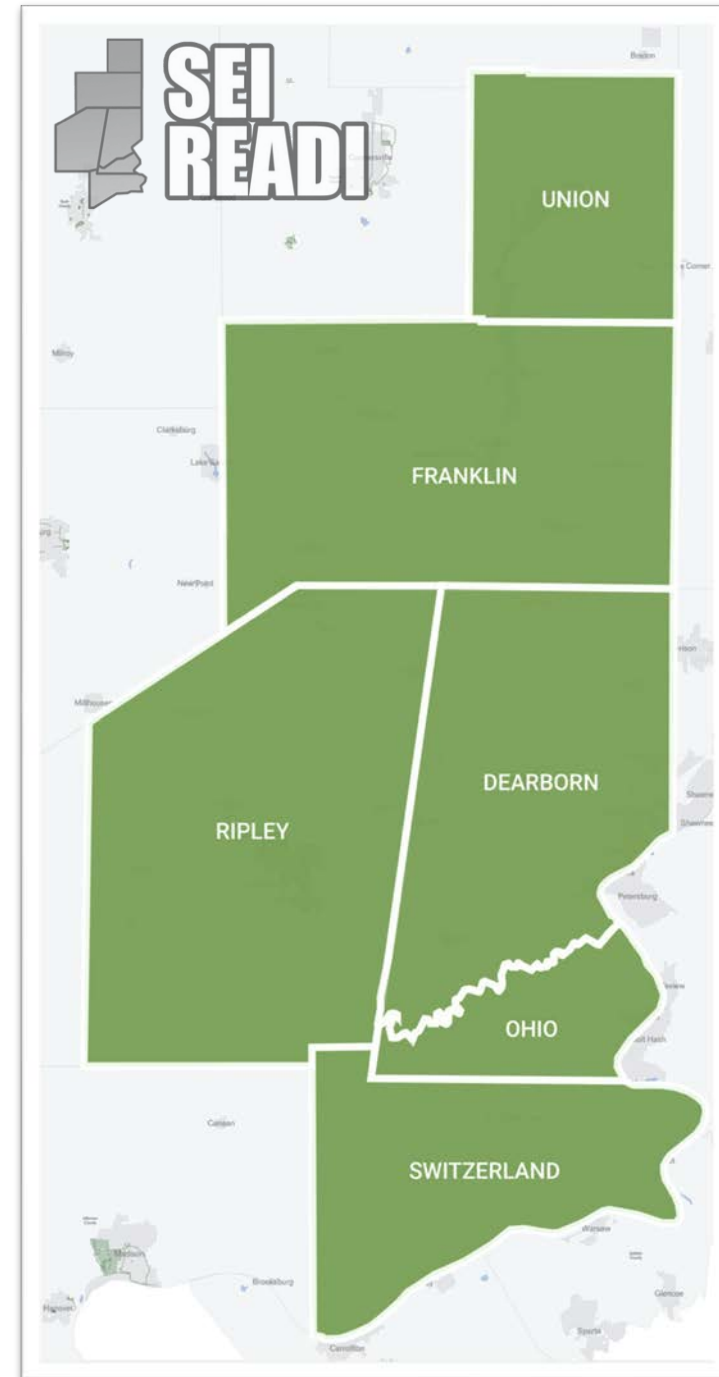
Introduction

This plan is part of Indiana's READI Arts & Culture Initiative as funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc. But it is so much more. **The purpose of this plan is to enhance quality of life, strengthen the local economy, and provide an important – often missing – piece to community planning: arts and culture.** It is one of 15 such plans that lay the groundwork for a decade of activity – a road map for cities, counties, and regions to use regardless of funding source, leadership, or what else the future might hold. It provides a long-term strategy with details and resources to strengthen local identity, foster economic growth, and attract and retain residents.

The Region

Comprised of Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, and Union Counties, the region is home to **1.84% of the state's population**. While it may have some challenging economic and demographic numbers, the region's deeply rooted music and craft traditions, visible history, connection to the Ohio River, rich natural assets, and proximity to Cincinnati provide tremendous opportunity.

*You will find a variety of shopping, dining, sports, nature, and entertainment. Children play safely outside and attend schools focused on their education and wellbeing. Recreational opportunities abound, including water sports on the Ohio River, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, swimming, bicycling, motorcycle riding, and golf. **We call ourselves the affordable Cincinnati address, as our region has a small town feel with big city amenities.***



Arts & Culture in Southeast Indiana

In the course of planning, we identified and inventoried the region's Cultural Assets including:

- **300** Artists, arts organizations, groups, businesses, and program sites
- **153** Pieces of Public Art including murals, sculptures, window art, and more
- **114** Related Civic Assets (parks, trails, schools, universities, and centers)
- **92** History and heritage organizations, sites, districts, and attractions
- **84** Events & Traditions (annual festivals, recurring series, and markets)
- **63** Support Organizations (boosters, Main Streets, Chambers, tourism, funders)
- **36** Misc. Amenities (community attractions, craft product producers, etc.)

Southeast Indiana is rich in cultural assets and activity. A strong base for building a plan upon.

Vision for Success

From that base, leaders and residents from all sectors and all corners of the region produced an ambitious vision – a collective aspiration – for the future in which:

The Arts are a Thriving, Vital Force that:

- Spark Community & Economic Vitality,
- Amplify Natural Assets & Regional Tourism,
- Foster Regional Collaboration through Local Leadership,
- Are Central to Engaging & Empowering the Next Generation, and where
- Creative Placemaking & Design have Solidified Vibrant Cultural Districts, because...

We Grow from Deep Roots –

Cultivating Big Opportunities with Small Town Charm

Goals & Strategies

The region will achieve that vision through six goals and strategies for each. Pairing goals within three overarching regional priorities, provides a balanced framework that addresses the core needs of every focus area.

230+

Southeast Hoosiers Participated through

- Visioning Sessions
- Groups
- Regional Leader Discussions
- Interviews
- A Public Survey

Not to mention dozens of online submissions, inquiries, and hundreds more website visitors.

What is "Arts & Culture"?

The plan values *the full creative ecosystem* –


Not only arts organizations, but the fabricators, makers, artisans, musicians, writers, crafters, podcasters, performers, designers, architects, libraries, and history organizations (and everyone within them).

Together they form the cultural fabric of the region and remind us that we each have a personal connection to the arts, whether through the high school band, having a favorite author, art teacher, or song, writing poetry, learning to play guitar, draw, crochet, dance...

Or simply loving to create the best music playlist ever.



The circled star highlights the goal collectively identified by the region as the top priority in plan.

Priorities	Goals	Strategies
priority PLACE & IDENTITY	1. ACTIVATE THE REGION  Revitalize and activate main streets, waterfronts, byways, and hidden gems through arts and culture. Filled with surprises, public art, entertainment, and food they thrive as Cultural Districts – living history hubs blended with creative energy, and small town charm to attract residents and explorers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement and reuse projects (<i>signage, façade programs, landscaping and historic buildings, open spaces</i>) Activate with public art and programs
	2. CONNECT COMMUNITIES Knit the region's Natural & Cultural Assets together (e.g., public art trails, regional program initiatives, and wayfinding design) to amplify and increase access to both, build relationships, and promote place-based discovery, wellness, and tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amplify and activate nature in combination with cultural assets (<i>thematic trails, creative programs, signs</i>) Build regional tourism through relationships, collective strategies, and efforts
priority ATTACHMENT & OPPORTUNITY	3. CULTIVATE NEXT GENERATION ROOTS Invest in initiatives with and for the next generation – expanding access to arts programming and education, increasing participation, and opening paths to creative careers. Deeply engaging the next generation in a vibrant Cultural Life will feed talent pipelines while increasing resident retention regionwide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower youth engagement and volunteerism Expand arts opportunities for all ages – <i>co-designed with target audiences</i> Build creative career pathways (<i>internships, programs</i>)
	4. GENERATE CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY Focus on the Art, Artists, & Creation – and opportunities to create – to position the creative sector for success. Generate opportunities with, by, and for artists, creative entrepreneurs, and nonprofits through training, program development, and material supports needed to grow authentically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower creative capacity (<i>connect to resources, training, micro-grants</i>) Expand access to space for creatives (<i>affordable spaces, retail opportunities</i>) Grow teaching and learning (<i>support paid gigs, knowledge and roster sharing programs</i>)
priority LEADERSHIP & COLLABORATION	5. MOBILIZE, COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE Collaborate to advance Cultural Development & Regionalism . Systemize collaboration and communication among leaders to align planning, build networks, share resources, and create joint programs to strengthen the region's collective capacity for long-term cultural growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilize county-level and regional networks – <i>creative and cross-sector</i> Expand implementation capacity (<i>volunteer recruitment, training</i>) Catalyze a regionwide movement (<i>cross sector, annual convening</i>)
	6. FORMALIZE SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS Hardwire Arts & Culture Strategy into governance, economic development, funding, and civic frameworks. Embedding arts and culture into plans and policies will ensure their sustainable visibility, investment, and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build support Build policy infrastructure (<i>% for art, streamline policies, etc.</i>) Secure sustainable funding

The BIG Ideas

These ideas supersize plan goals, reimagining them as bold opportunities to elevate and expand the region and its vision. They are *“What if?” opportunities for long-term, whole-region advancement* rather than short-term project recommendations. Since great change requires enthusiasm and commitment, these ideas are offered for exploration and consideration.

1. ALL-IN MARKETING:

Art Connected to Nature



What would it look like to go “All-In” – to **showcase incredible natural assets** like the Ohio River Way, Versailles State Park, and Monarch Preserve **alongside a treasure trove of cultural attractions and sites**? Imagine a collectively curated web platform weaving in stories, showcasing artisans, highlighting events and opportunities, and connecting residents and visitors to the people and places that define the region. Then think bigger. Imagine a **shared regional marketing strategy across multiple platforms that creates a clear “brand” or sense of united identity centered on art and nature.**

2. FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE REGION:

Indiana’s Music Corridor

Celebrating **southeastern Indiana’s deep musical roots** – from Richmond, birthplace of recorded jazz to Madison’s “music city” – this corridor would showcase both the region’s incredible musical legacy and today’s vibrant culture. The bookends are strong but make no sense without the region in-between. **Music is in Southeast Indiana’s DNA.** Musicians celebrate, support, share, and mentor one another, and there’s no shortage of venues for folks to play – from backyards and bars to senior centers and event centers.

3. DEEP TRADITIONS & PRACTICE:

The Region as Folk School

Rooted in its legacy of music, craft, and making, Southeast Indiana has **the ingredients to become a nationally recognized center for folks arts learning.** By establishing a folk school or a network of creative learning centers, the region can foster creative careers and lifelong learners while strengthening local businesses.

“It’s hard to express how important our READI work is across so many communities and so many sectors. Right now we have all 15 regions, the entire state, working on Arts & Culture Strategic Plans that align with their READI plans.

The scale and breadth of this work in this sector has never been done before. Even beyond the awards we’ll be able to make in the next year,

the impact of having this many people focused specifically on Arts & Culture has the chance to fundamentally impact generations of Hoosiers.

– Jim Rawlinson
Director of READI, Indiana Economic Development Corporation
[Posted to LinkedIn](#), October 2025



Art in the Park, Versailles State Park



Lucy Yatso, Chalkfest 2025, Osgood

Contact

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The Rest of the Plan. The full document includes detailed goals, strategies, and tactics along with:

- **County Profiles** as a start for local leaders to use in adapting the plan to their needs.
- **A Toolkit** of ideas, inspiration, resources, and a glossary.
- **Recommended Tools** scattered throughout the plan.
- **An Appendix** with the methodology and detailed data tables
- There is more on the [Project Website](#) that will gradually be available directly from [SEI READI](#).



Dillsboro Heritage Days display

Acknowledgements

SEI READI

Mary McCarty, Executive Director
Kiley Sparks, Project Development Coordinator

William Schirmer, President – Franklin Co.
Pam Wilson, Vice President – Switzerland Co.
Barry Lauber, Secretary & Treasurer – Ripley Co.
Alison Webb, Director – Union Co.
Kathy Kelly, Director – Ohio Co.
Jody Blasdel, Director – Dearborn Co.

Initiative Funder, Partners & Consultant Team



Lilly Endowment Inc.
A private foundation since 1937



Sara A. Peterson &
Paige Sharp
in collaboration as

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES **ART**
through the power of arts and culture



Arts & Culture Plan

WELCOME



The Project

This plan is part of Indiana’s READI Arts & Culture Initiative as funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. (LEI). But it is so much more. It is one of 15 such plans that lay the groundwork for a decade of activity – ***a road map for cities, counties, and regions to use regardless of funding source, leadership, or what else the future might hold.***

This is an incredible moment for Indiana. A moment that has united the state’s economic development infrastructure, its arts, culture, and history sectors (artists, creative businesses, nonprofits, and programs), and communities of every size in a simultaneous effort to:

Foster More Vibrant and Livable Communities for Generations to Come.

We are unaware of any other effort of this scope or scale. And it didn’t happen by accident. A state policy initiative inspired the private investment that brought us here (*box right*). **This is also an incredible moment for Southeast Indiana** resulting in a comprehensive strategy for achieving its ambitious vision in which:

The Arts are a Thriving, Vital Force that:

- Spark Community & Economic Vitality,
- Amplify Natural Assets & Regional Tourism,
- Foster Regional Collaboration through Local Leadership,
- Are Central to Engaging & Empowering the Next Generation, and where
- Creative Placemaking & Design have Solidified Vibrant Cultural Districts, because...

**We Grow from Deep Roots –
Cultivating Big Opportunities with Small Town Charm.**

This directly supports the region’s economic vision, goals, and other aspirations.

Soon after these plans are launched across the state, the state will launch the LEI Arts & Culture Initiative funding opportunity to support projects that align with this plan. While this will be the last step of the state’s project, it will be just the beginning of work on the ground.

READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Initiative

ABOUT

In 2021, Governor Eric J. Holcomb launched the [Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative](#) (READI 1.0) allocating \$500M of pandemic funding among Indiana’s 92 counties.

2023 brought READI 2.0 – a new \$500M investment – focused on **Quality of Life, Place, & Opportunity**. It encouraged regions to include arts and culture initiatives to help them know how to work proactively with economic development and prepare the sector to be better poised to access future funding.

In 2024, the [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) put \$250M behind it – including \$65M for a first-ever statewide initiative advancing creative transformation. With that grant, the [LEI Arts & Culture Initiative](#) was born for regions working with a broad cross-section of residents to develop assets, experiences, and initiatives.

Soon after, the [Indiana Economic Development Corp.](#) announced \$1.5M for arts and culture planning and led by [Indiana Arts Commission](#)-identified experts.

GOALS

Engage residents and communities across creative, geographic, and demographic boundaries • **Unleash** regional creative transformation through investment in public art and culture amenities that are accessible to the entire community • **Elevate** READI’s quality of place impact on Indiana’s cities and towns • **Build** a critical mass of authentic, yet bold, artistic, and culture assets with a long-term plan for their maintenance and expansion.

The Plan

Overall Approach

This regional Arts and Culture Plan is grounded in the region's capacity and resources while looking forward with vision and intention.

First, it takes an *"Arts and" approach* – **recognizing that arts and culture are not separate, but integral to efforts in economic development, tourism, community development and vitality, activating parks, education, and more.** Implementation depends on leaders across these sectors working together, with arts and culture seen as a key ingredient for shared success.

What is "Arts & Culture"?

The plan values **the full creative ecosystem** – **not only arts organizations,** but the fabricators, makers, artisans, musicians, writers, crafters, podcasters, performers, designers, architects, libraries, and history organizations (and everyone within them).

Together they form the cultural fabric of the region and remind us that we each have a personal connection to the arts, whether through the high school band, having a favorite author, art teacher, or song, writing poetry, learning to play guitar, draw, crochet, dance... or simply loving to create the best music playlist ever.

Regional & Hyperlocal

This plan is designed to be implemented on both the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. The plan belongs to the region, not any one organization or place. It provides **regional direction and aspiration that can be achieved through local initiative** – regional and hyperlocal at the same time. The smallest towns and counties were intentionally placed on an equal footing with the largest of both throughout the process and in the resulting strategies.

Feasible & Sustainable




This plan also **acknowledges current and future funding realities**, building strategies that are both aspirational and sustainable. It is designed to align with and complement existing

Document Guide Find What You Need

This document can be used as a **whole or in parts.**

- Welcome Introductory Materials
- **THE REGION THIS IS THE PLAN**
- The Counties Profiles of Each
- The Toolkit Implementation Aids
- Appendix Methodology & Data

Each section can stand alone as can any of the individual County Profiles.

 The cloud points to links a reader might miss.
 The lightbulb points to footnotes and tips.
 The toolbox identifies a recommended tool.

The Document is also color coded. Here's the Key:

priority • **priority** • **priority**
big ideas • **counties** • **appendix** • **everything else**

More for the Reader

These **light gray boxes** are found throughout the document. They are your source for:

- Regional development plan alignment,
- **Digging Deeper** ideas and resources,
- **Your Input** quotes from participants,
- **Making the Case** for a strategy
- Recommended Tools, and
- Statistics, quotes, and definitions for context

Darker boxes list the contents of a section.

community plans, so that collectively, the region moves forward in concert toward a stronger, more connected, and more resilient future.

Participation

This plan emerged from a community-driven, asset-based approach to arts and culture planning. Together, this allowed for deep and diverse participation across sectors and communities. **Over 230 Southeast Hoosiers participated in:**

- 6 Community Visioning Sessions
- 7 Focus Groups & Regional Leader Discussions
- 30-ish Interviews
- 1 Public Survey

230+

Not to mention dozens of online submissions, inquiries, and hundreds more website visitors.

Heritage Hall,
Rising Sun

Historic reuse
project: church
turned venue



Participation by Sector

Sector	Participation
Arts, Culture & History	30%
City/County Government	16%
Libraries & Other *	14%
Foundations / Funders	9%
Chambers & Main Streets	6%
Economic Dev. & Related	5%
Tourism & Attractions	4%
Business & Manufacturing	3%
Education (K12 & Higher Ed.)	3%
Finance & Professional Services	2%
Health & Social Services	< 1%
Unknown	9%

* Other includes media, extension, and misc.

Participation by County

	Participation vs 2020 Pop	
Dearborn	28%	40%
Franklin	24%	18%
Ohio	8%	5%
Ripley	23%	23%
Switzerland	8%	8%
Union	4%	6%
Multi/Other	4%	--

Including 30 cities and towns across the region

See the Appendix

for the full methodology (pages 128-135) including participation details.

Sections of the Plan

The plan (*"The Region"* pages 17-64) includes several components, one leading to the next.

About the Region. This introduces the SEI READI region, its counties, economy, and regional development authority at a high level.

State of the Arts. This bird's eye view of the region's arts and culture identity, assets, and inventory provides an assessment of strengths and challenges in the creative sector, and the opportunities and challenges addressed in this plan.

Vision & Success Measures. This plan fully embraces the region's vision for economic development, adding detail specific to the *"Arts and" approach*.

Goals & Strategies. The plan is organized to move seamlessly from vision to action. Three overarching regional priorities each supported by two goals, provide a balanced framework that addresses the core needs of every focus area. Each goal is presented in its own section and is supported by strategies and tactics that outline practical steps for implementation.

Big Ideas. These are carefully curated big bets for the region – ways to supersize the goals and strategies for regional impact.

★ **Implementation.** The circled star highlights the goal collectively identified by the region as the top priority in plan.

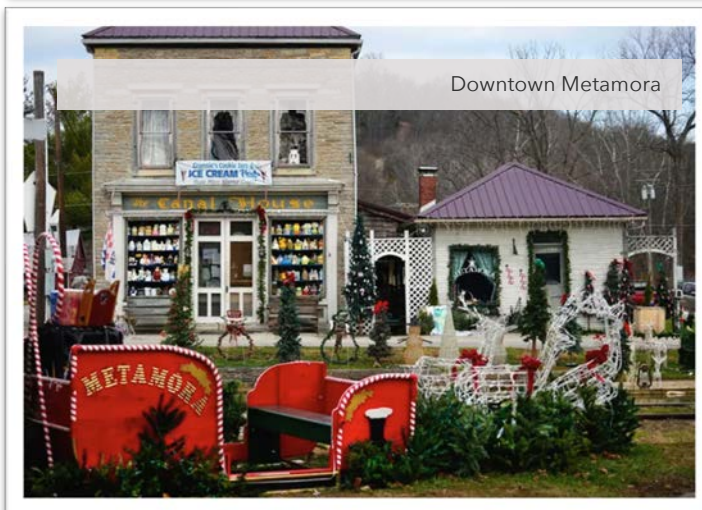
The Counties. The profiles here provide a starting guide for each county in adapting this plan to their individual needs.

The Toolkit. Also included is a toolkit of ideas and inspiration drawn from national and local examples to spark creativity and show what's possible. These resources align directly with goals and are designed to deepen understanding, build confidence, and equip leaders with the tools they need to translate ideas into action. Not every idea will fit every community, but all can inform new approaches.

Appendix. Here are the methodology and technical details that supports the plan overall.

More resources are available online. These are currently connected with the project website but will transition to SEI READI in early 2026

- [Materials](#) from the planning process (e.g., presentations, recaps)
- [Spreadsheets](#) for each county (e.g., asset inventories, participation, plans reviewed)
- The regional [asset map](#) online.



Principles Used in Arts & Culture Planning

ARTS PLANNING SHOULD BE:

1. **Ground-Up** Regions are comprised of counties, which are comprised of communities, which are people, places, organizations, activities, traditions – build from the bottom not the top.
2. **Authentic** Celebrate community history, heritage, stories, and points of pride – its unique cultural identity.
3. **Asset-Based** Built on the foundation of strengths – it's the best way to fill in the gaps.
4. **Team Sport** This is a “yes, and” proposition. It only works with broad collaboration and community engagement – arts and culture WITH economic development and planning, education and health care, cities and civic organizations, tourism, and Main Street, etc.
5. **Visionary** Think big about a long-term horizon for goals and strategies, not projects – that's where the magic happens.
6. **Interdependent** Not just aligned with the momentum of existing plans and projects but reinforcing – other plans support arts and culture; arts and culture support other plans.
7. **Sustainable** First, do no harm. Then, make sure results can last.
8. **Creative** The plan will be arts and culture after all and should ARTify / ARTivate all the goals and strategies.
9. **So Much More than Murals** It includes your local artists and creative economy, theaters and museums, arts education for all ages, festivals, and concert series, knitting circles and woodworking clubs, amphitheaters, and bar stages, and so very much more.
10. **Interesting & Fun** Because that's what art, artists, and culture ultimately bring – joy and discovery (and besides, everyone needs motivation – every great pop song has a hook).

WHERE DOES ARTS PLANNING FIT?

If **tourism plans** focus on attracting visitors: what is there to do here?

And **development** on attracting businesses and jobs: what supports are here?

Both depend on a vibrant quality of life and of place – which is where an arts plan comes in.

FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, THE COMMUNITY –

What you celebrate, what brings you joy, what is good for your kids and your health, how you express yourselves and develop as full humans.

It isn't just what you are close to.

It's who you are and what you have, right here, every day.

“Creative Placemaking:
Strengthening Communities
with Arts at the Core

NEA Creative Placemaking Technical Assistance

Principles from
Sara A. Peterson
in collaboration with Paige Sharp (2025)



Arts & Culture Plan

THE REGION



Southeast Indiana

Comprised of Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, and Union Counties, the region describes itself as offering:

a great lifestyle for the individuals and families associated with that growth. Nestled amid beautiful, rolling hills, our small- to mid-size communities and rural areas provide a comfortable, relaxed setting.

You will find a variety of shopping, dining, sports, nature, and entertainment. Children play safely outside and attend schools focused on their education and wellbeing. Recreational opportunities abound, including water sports on the Ohio River, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, swimming, bicycling, motorcycle riding, and golf.

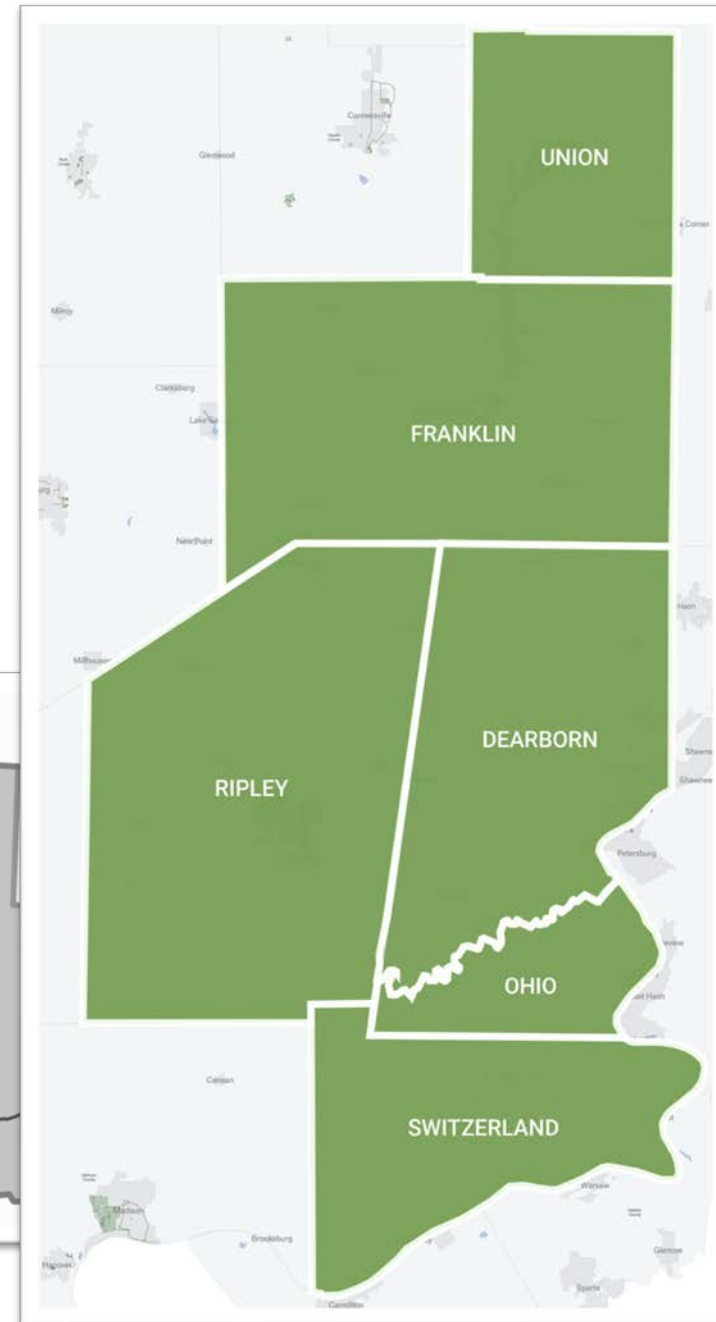
We call ourselves the affordable Cincinnati address, as our region has a small town feel with big city amenities.

Population

The region is home to **1.8% of the state's population**. For perspective, the SEI region, just over 125,000 residents, is only slightly larger than Evansville (approx. 117,300) or Delaware County (approx. 113,000). It is also home to the two least populated counties in the state – Union and Ohio.

Only two counties have cities or towns larger than 3,500 residents. In Ripley County the City of Batesville is divided across two counties, Ripley and Franklin neither holding the county seat.

Three (sometimes four as Union bounces in/out of the official definition) of the region's six counties are included in the Cincinnati-Wilmington, OH-KY-IN CSA ([Combined Statistical Area](#)).



This proximity provides a significant opportunity for the region – a strong population base to attract as residents, industries, and initiatives to leverage, and access to a major metropolitan market for workforce recruitment and tourism. However, some noted that crossing the river toward Cincinnati is difficult with few ferries or bridges and higher costs to use them, creating a barrier to this opportunity.

Economic Drivers

From an economic development perspective, the region touts its:

- Great Schools & Affordable Housing
- A Thriving Business Community
- A Safe & Relaxed Lifestyle
- Natural Amenities & Recreation (including the Ohio River, its trails, and byways)
- Proximity to Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky

Key Numbers

The region has **strengths** to build from, but they are **uneven**.

- **Poverty Rate.** All but one of the counties have lower rates than the state.
- **Median Household Income.** While half of the counties are below the state, half are above. Of these, one is in the top 10.
- **Population Growth.** All but one of the counties is growing, even if only slightly.
- **Median Age.** At the same time, the population is **3-10 YEARS OLDER** than the state.

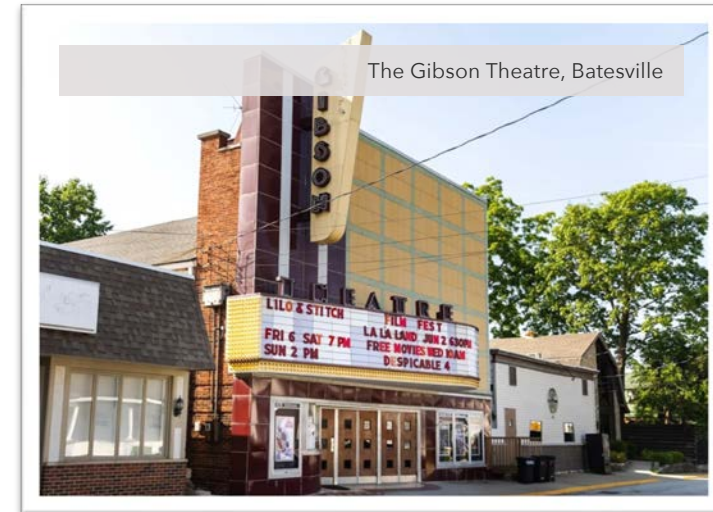
	2020 Census	2020-24 Growth	2024 Median Age	2023 Median Household Income	2023 Poverty Rate
Dearborn	50,679	1.5%	43	Co. Rank #7 \$82,578	8%
Franklin	22,785	1.5%	43	#13 \$77,456	9%
Ohio	5,940	0.9%	48	#33 \$70,757	9%
Ripley	28,995	0.8%	41	#45 \$66,942	10%
Switzerland	9,737	3.0%	43	#77 \$60,219	13%
Union	7,087	(3.0%)	45	#56 \$64,648	11%
SEI REGION	125,223	1.14%	44	\$ 70,433	Ave. 10%
INDIANA	SEI is 1.84% of IN	2.0%	38	SEI is 101% of \$69,458	12%
NATION	-----	2.6%	39	and 87% of \$80,610	11%

See each county's profile for additional numbers (pages 65-102)

One Region, Six counties,

1.84%

of the state population



“Growing places face problems, but these are happy problems.

Shrinking places also face problems, but they are unhappy problems.

The loss of residents means declining demand for restaurants and grocery stores... fewer well-educated residents to run for city council or school board... a shortage of volunteers. Declining places suffer from higher overhead costs of operating everything.

Excerpt from [What the Census tells Hoosiers..](#)
Michael Hicks (Daily Journal, March 26, 2025)

Population, Service & Professional Needs

With an aging population, the region is on the verge of shrinking. A step further, as a region, Southeast Indiana faces critical human capital needs.

- **Legal Deserts.** A [July 2025 report from the Commission on Indiana's Legal Future](#) categorized Union and Franklin Counties as legal deserts (< 1/1,000 residents).
- **Health Professional Shortage Areas.** Every county has at least one [HPSA designation](#). (See also <https://www.indianapca.org/about-chcs/hpsa-mua/>)
- **Banking Deserts.** The [Federal Reserve](#) has identified three banking deserts in the region (Dearborn and Ohio) (each with the closest branch 5-10 miles away) with the potential for two more to emerge (Franklin and Dearborn).

This region needs active vigilance and in-migration – or more aggressive strategies – to counter-balance age and other risks like these (e.g., the uncertain future of Rising Star Casino in Rising Sun).

Livability

We know that quality of life and place drive individual location decisions, and that people go to a place first to find a job later.

Because of this, it is important to understand the region's livability. With many ways of doing this, we chose the [AARP Livability Index](#) for its consistency, depth, and focus on all life cycles.

"AARP employs a variety of survey research to inform [its methodology] to reflect a wide range of preferences for people living at all stages of life.

*Metrics... are scored for each of the **seven livability categories**: Housing, Neighborhood, Transportation, Environment, Health, Engagement, and Opportunity...*

Those communities with more livability-friendly practices earn a score above 50 and those facing obstacles to livability score lower."

According to the 2024 Index, the SEI region's **strongest category is "Opportunity"** where four of the six counties have scores approximately 75 or higher. That is exciting to see. At the same time, its **weakest category is "Health"**. While none of the counties do well in this, the fact that Switzerland has a score below 25 is deeply concerning.

Digging Deeper What comes first, people or jobs?

Today, the conclusion is simple:

“ *People are increasingly relocating to and staying in places where they wish to live, and jobs are following.*

Places with higher estimated quality of life are associated with higher population growth and in turn higher job growth.

This is true in the Midwest and even more so for rural areas in the Midwest.

[M]ore than a dozen key amenities – including school spending, low crime rates, recreation and arts and culture places, food stores, and personal care places – are associated with quality of life,

They also found that natural amenities, such as moderate temperatures, play a more modest role in quality of life after accounting for the prevalence of recreation businesses.

Together, this work suggests **public, private, and natural amenities are playing a significant role in fostering healthy local economies.**

Excerpted from
[Why Have Local Economic Development Policies Been So...?](#)
(M.J. Hicks, A Weinstein, E Wornell in [Reaching Regions](#), 2025)

The Regional Average Compared with U.S. Median Scores

	Region	U.S.	Difference	
Livability Overall Score	50	50	Equal	
The 7 Livability Categories – Ranked				
1. Opportunity	72	50	+ 22 pts	3 STRENGTHS with scores above 50 and above the national median
2. Environment	60	61	– 1 pt	
3. Housing	57	59	– 2 pts	
4. Engagement	45	47	– 2 pts	4 CHALLENGES with scores below 50 of which 3 are also below median
5. Neighborhood	41	36	+ 5 pts	
6. Transportation	40	44	– 4 pts	
7. Health	35	40	– 5 pts	

The Region's Top Strength & Challenge by County

	Union	Ohio	Franklin	Dearborn	Ripley	Switzerland
Livability Overall Score	55	52	51	49	48	45
1. Opportunity	83	74	76	74	57	68
7. Health	35	36	41	43	34	22

Green boxes highlight each county's highest score. Pink boxes highlight each county's lowest score. Index Scores are based on 61 Indicators (outlined in the Appendix along with county scores for all 7 categories, page 119). Full details are available at [/livabilityindex.aarp.org/methods-sources](https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/methods-sources).

Access to (or lack of) reliable **internet, computing, broadband** is often a dealbreaker for today's mobile workforce. 2022 data put **the region as much as to 5 points behind Indiana** overall.

% of Households	No Internet	Cell Data Only	Mobile Dev. Only	No Computing Dev
Regional Average	15%	15%	17%	11%
Indiana	11%	13%	17%	7%
United States	9%	11%	15%	7%

2017-2022 change, urban/rural differences, and county-by-county details are available in the Appendix, page 120 [Analyzing Indiana's Digital Landscape](#) (Purdue Center for Rural Development, January 2024)

The data shows big gains at both the county and regional level in recent years, thanks in part to the region's [Broadband Initiatives](#) and [Digital Inclusion Plan](#). But there remain holes to fill in order to maximize resident and business potential.



Schwester Art, Oldenburg Historic District

Digging Deeper Beyond Connectivity

“Rural counties with **high broadband adoption rates of over 80% have significant advantages** over those with low usage, including:

- 213% *higher* Business Growth
- 10% *higher* Self-Employment Growth
- 44% *higher* GDP Growth
- 18% *higher* Per Capita Income Growth

“Broadband is the equalizer in today's economy.”

[Beyond Connectivity: The Role of Broadband in Rural Economic Growth & Resilience](#) (Center on Rural Innovation, September 2024)

Conclusions

Even before looking at the **State of the Arts**, several things are clear:

- The region must **attract families, young people, and professionals** to sustain and grow its population and economy.
- Southeast Indiana is a high **“Opportunity”** region (AARP) which sets it up well for many of the goals and strategies in this plan.
- It has critical barriers to address in **Engagement, Neighborhoods, Transportation, and Health** (AARP). Of these, the goals and strategies of this plan could have a positive impact on all but health. Even that is only because of the measures used for that category. This plan can certainly have a positive impact on community health outside those specific measures.

See [//livabilityindex.aarp.org/methods-sources](https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/methods-sources) for additional details about each category and their measurement indicators.

Recognizing the above, **this plan provides a framework for harnessing the region’s creative assets to improve quality of life, strengthen communities, and support sustainable growth.**

About “Opportunity”

AARP justifies it with “Inclusive communities can provide residents an equal chance to earn a living wage and improve their well-being, from jobs to education. Supporting multigenerational, diverse communities with a strong regional economy and fiscally healthy local governments is at the heart of ensuring a rich and full life for all.”

And measures it by looking at:

- The gap between rich and poor (using the Gini Index, a measure of income inequality)
- Economic opportunity using jobs per worker
- Adjusted 4-year high school cohort graduation rate
- Age-group diversity of local vs. national population (multi-generational communities)
- Local government AAA general obligation bond rating
- State and local vs. federal minimum wage and cost of living adjustments
- State policies that expand upon FMLA benefits to workers

SEI READI

Southeast Indiana’s Regional Economic Development Organization

SEI READI, Inc. (SEI), was created in 2021 as a six-county collaboration in response to READI 1.0. By joining together, SEI READI is about a collaborative group of Indiana communities taking control of their destinies. They aim to achieve a higher probability of success in obtaining the greatest allocation of state funding possible.

Serving Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, and Union counties, its focus is more targeted than the region’s planning entity (Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission – SIRPC) and its nine counties. That larger entity

“was formed to sustain and increase communication and coordination between member governments in the creation of policies and activities for addressing regional issues collaboratively and providing a forum from which economic and community development can occur.”

SEI READI is administered by SIRPC, allowing SEI READI to benefit from that larger mission, skillset, access to leaders and information, and program offerings.



Contact

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mary.mccarty@sirpc.org

More at <https://southeastindiana.org>
 and <https://www.sirpc.org>

State of the Arts

Overview

This section provides an overview of the region's unique identity, the strengths and weaknesses of its arts and culture sector, and a similar assessment of the supports surrounding that sector.

Arts & Culture Identity

The region's identity is carved by geography and history. As little as 20 minutes from Cincinnati, half the region belongs to the Cincinnati metropolitan area, offering urban accessibility while maintaining rural character. Nestled along the Ohio River and rolling through the fertile Whitewater Valley, SEI READI's six counties – Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, and Union – form a region where heritage runs deep and creativity flourishes. With a combined population just over 125,000, this corner of Indiana offers an uncommon blend: ***small-town charm meets modern cultural assets, historic preservation mingles with innovation, and neighborly generosity*** shapes the region's creative culture.

Nature as Cultural Asset

The region's natural beauty – Brookville Lake, Whitewater Memorial State Park, Versailles State Park, and the scenic Ohio River – ***draws over a million visitors annually***. Perfect North Slopes, riverfront parks, and winding trails connect residents and visitors to recreation. Modern attractions like Rising Star, Belterra and Hollywood Casinos complement historic sites, while mottos like Union County's "***Stopped for the lake, stayed for the life***" capture the quality of place that keeps people coming back. These landscapes inspire plein air painting events, outdoor concerts, canal-side performances, and river-based festivals, integrating nature with creative expression.

Industry & Living History

The Ohio River powered early commerce, drawing German, Irish, and Swiss immigrants who brought farming traditions, winemaking expertise, and manufacturing ingenuity. River towns like Rising Sun and Lawrenceburg thrived as commercial hubs, while the Whitewater Canal and

Contents

- Overview
- Arts & Culture Identity
- Creative & Capacity Assets
- Capacity Needs
- Conclusions

“When arts thrive in a community, the community thrives.”

— Indiana Arts Commission



2025 SEIMA Hall of Fame Inductee, My Brothers Keeper

valley settlement patterns shaped communities like Metamora and Brookville. Industrial strength emerged early and endures. Lawrenceburg earned its title as **"Whiskey City USA"** through 200 years of Ross & Squibb Distillery history, while companies like Batesville Casket Company anchor manufacturing traditions. Innovation threads through generations: from J.W. Whitlock's 19th-century automatic harp to Rees Harps' modern **Harpsicle Harps**, winner of the **2024 "Coolest Thing Made in Indiana"** award. This spirit of making remains central to regional character.

Southeast Indiana **doesn't just preserve history; it lives it daily**. Communities like Metamora and Oldenburg serve as living time capsules, where German heritage and canal-era structures shape tourism and identity. Franklin County's Brookville claims important artists T.C. Steele and J. Ottis Adams, along with three early Indiana governors. Switzerland County, the **"Rhineland of America,"** celebrates its founding as a national wine grape leader, with Vevay's earning recognition as Best Small Town in the Midwest in 2023 and 2024. The region's Underground Railroad role is a point of pride as is the **"Milan Miracle"** of 1954, when Milan High School won the state basketball championship, became the "heart of Hoosier hysteria" and inspired **"Hoosiers."** With multiple museums, 13 historic districts (below), and more National Register listings, history grounds the region.

DEARBORN	Downtown Aurora Historic District • Downtown Lawrenceburg Historic District • Greendale Historic District
FRANKLIN	Brookville Historic District • Central Batesville Historic District • Metamora Historic District • Oldenburg Historic District
OHIO	Rising Sun Historic District
RIPLEY	Versailles Square
SWITZERLAND	Vevay Historic District
UNION	Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District • Liberty Residential Historic District

Music & Creative Traditions That Endure

Music, fiber arts, and woodworking stand out as **enduring traditions, supported by robust communities of practice**. The Southeastern Indiana Musicians Association, venues including the Liberty, Gibson, and Damn Theatres; three casinos, and riverfront venues anchor the music scene. Metamora alone hosts an extraordinary concentration of music gatherings while signature events like the Dillsboro Jazz Festival, Happy Valley Bluegrass Festival, Batesville Art & Music Festival, and Lawrenceburg Main Street's Music on the River draw crowds regionwide. Countless taverns, wineries, theaters, and festival stages keep musical heritage alive and thriving.

Cross Sector Strategies for Creative Rural Development

“When it comes to rural arts access and creative development, economic growth and sustainability are not only about recruiting businesses to establish and bring jobs.

Rural economic resiliency is aided by strong local leadership combined with community vision and branding. Rural economies succeed when communities understand themselves – who they are and what they have to offer.

Not only does a strong creative identity engender local community pride, it creates a brand that attracts visitors and future residents.



[Strategy Sampler](#)
National Association of State Arts Agencies, 2025



Red Hot Glass Fusing, Rising Sun

Visual and literary arts flourish with equal vigor. Signature festivals like Freudenfest, the Franklin County Quilt Show, and the Goatauqua Art Fair inspired by beloved Fred the Goat amplify community identity, while events such as the Plein Air Paint Out echo Hoosier Group traditions. Artisan excellence is reflected in **nationally recognized makers** including Iron Timbers (featured on HGTV's *Good Bones*), Red Forge, Thornfire Forge, and designated "Indiana Artisans." Lawrenceburg's literary festival, local published writers, bookstores, and publishers add literary depth.

Despite their small populations, these counties support an **active creative culture**. Recording studios, design firms, pottery studios, quilters, woodworkers, and specialty businesses – from Lizzy Green Mosaics to The fAxtory Music Co. – demonstrate vitality. Arts centers in Dearborn, Franklin, Ripley, and Switzerland County provide programming and leadership, while organizations like Southeast Indiana Woodturners, SEI MakerPlus, and informal groups such as Union County Knitting Club create networks for makers and artists.

Public art initiatives bring 21st century flair to historic towns. The "**Great Chicken Fry**" rooster sculptures in Brookville, playful fire hydrant characters in Oldenburg, and growing collections of indoor and outdoor works reflect commitment to place-making. Quirky touches – like Kat Von D's **garden of 30,000 black tulips** in Switzerland County – reveal the region's spirit of creative expression and fun.

A Spirit of Community

What truly distinguishes Southeast Indiana is its people, known for their "**can-do**" attitude, **generosity, and willingness to support one another**. This neighborly culture, rooted in families here for generations, creates an environment where traditions carry forward while embracing contemporary expression. From Switzerland County's quirky charm to Union County's small but mighty foundation of arts and culture from which to grow, connect, and expand, Southeast Indiana presents a unified identity: rooted in heritage, shaped by creativity, sustained by natural beauty, connected to urban opportunity, and animated by a spirit that welcomes all who visit, stay, or call it home.

Creative & Capacity Assets

While the sector could greatly benefit from capacity building programs, services, and networking, there are key strengths and a creative sector backbone in each county.

Digging Deeper into Distinctive Features

The following are just a few of the assets that are unique to the region:

DEARBORN

- Archaeological Research Institute
- Ross & Squibb Distillery
- Perfect North Slopes
- Oxbow Inc.
- Bokenkotter Blooms

FRANKLIN

- Roosters + Chicken Festival then tour the rest of the region for chicken to compare
- [Hickory Road Inn](#) craft retreat facility "where Craftiness is Happiness (with no cooking or cleaning!)"

SWITZERLAND

- Fred + Goatauqua and Rubber Ducks
- Black tulips, and everything that comes with Kat Von D

REGIONWIDE

- Ghost Stories, Haunted Houses & Asylums
- Metamora Castle – Yes, a castle in Indiana
- Trains, Muzzleloaders, & Old West Shootouts re-enacted

NEARBY

- America's River Roots Festival in Cincinnati
- Creation Museum / Ark across the way in Kentucky for carryover tourism

Cultural Asset Inventory By the Numbers

	Dearborn	Franklin	Ohio	Ripley	Switzerland	Union	Total
Category							
Artist/Creative Bus.	61	25	19	47	30	24	206
Public Art	31	35	25	42	12	8	153
History & Heritage	32	17	6	22	11	4	92
Events & Traditions	22	20	11	17	7	7	84
Art in Non-Art Spaces	15	13	6	13	4	4	55
Nonprofit Arts	11	3	—	5	2	—	21
Informal Arts Group	7	4	—	1	2	4	18
Discipline							
Visual Arts	27	14	12	17	15	12	97
Traditional Craft	13	14	6	16	13	8	70
Music	16	8	5	14	4	3	50
Literary Arts	19	1	—	9	2	2	33
Design	3	—	1	—	2	6	12
Dance	3	2	—	2	—	1	7
Theater	1	1	—	2	2	—	6
Location Type							
Venue	10	5	4	9	3	1	32
Retail	9	2	3	6	3	2	25
Museum	4	—	2	6	5	—	17
Library	6	2	1	4	1	1	15
History Society/Club	3	3	1	2	2	1	12
Center/Coop/Council	7	2	—	2	1	—	12
Support Entities							
Economic Develop.	5	2	1	6	4	1	19
Foundation / Funder	2	3	2	6	3	1	17
Friends & Volunteers	2	5	—	2	1	2	12
Tourism / CVB	1	1	1	1	2	—	6
Local Media or Club	2	1	—	2	—	—	5
Professional Network	1	1	—	2	—	—	4
Miscellaneous							
Schools	19	9	3	15	4	3	53
Parks	12	7	4	15	7	3	48
Other Attractions	10	9	4	3	3	5	34
Trails	3	2	1	3	3	1	13
Craft Products	1	—	—	—	—	1	2

Detail in the Appendix, pages 122-123

About
The Cultural Asset Inventory

The cultural asset inventory is a compilation of as many of the arts and culture assets as possible within the project's desk research and crowdsourcing. **It is not about "regional" assets but rather assets in the region.**

It is incomplete, and that is okay. Errors are a byproduct. Almost by definition, any asset inventory like this will be incomplete. Information is always incomplete; someone is always moving; something is always changing. Someone (or several ones) will be missing and may even be wrong.

Readers may argue with categories. That's okay too. **The purpose is less about perfection than about identifying opportunity to build from.**

With that in mind, the cultural asset inventory should be considered **a living, working tool for communities and the region.**

- What is a [Cultural Asset](#)?
- Here are the [inventory sheets](#) for each county
- Here is the [interactive map](#) online.

**Need help with the categories?**

See Methodology in the Appendix for details about how this inventory was compiled, what is (or isn't) included in it, and a few caveats about it.

For the table here, a few of the categories are broader than they may seem at first glance. For instance, the following include:

Visual Arts includes two-dimensional (e.g., painting, photography, tattoo) art and sculpture

Traditional Crafts include ceramics, fiber, glass, jewelry, leather, metal, and wood

Design includes graphic, web, interior, and other designers as well as architects, SWAG shops (e.g., embroidered sweatshirts), and fabricators — also widespread

Economic Development includes local organizations such as Main Street, Beautification, and Downtown Revitalization

Venues include indoor, outdoor, public- and private-owned

Backbone. Every county in the region has at least some form of arts infrastructure (creative sector backbone) – whether formal or informal – providing a strong base to build upon. While every county has elements of a creative backbone – anchor arts organization, spaces, and outlets for artists, the presence and strengths of those assets vary across the region. The box to the right highlights the region’s Creative Backbone.

Anchors. In addition, the region’s creative sector has anchors providing capacity and strength.

- **Libraries** are key contributors to the creative space by providing programming (book clubs, arts and crafts workshops, lectures, performances, community art exhibits, etc.) for all ages and serving as a convenor and partner. Often small communities lack any other cultural connector, and libraries serve a valuable, if not critical, role in filling that gap.
- **Individual artists, teachers, makers, and their businesses.** While asset mapping identified 206 artists / creative businesses, there’s no doubt many more exist. Individual artists and creative businesses frequently do not include their local address assumably because there’s a fear they won’t be taken as seriously as those from larger areas.
- In addition, there are numerous arts and craft festivals, non-arts markets with vendor opportunities, groups, and private studios.

Gaps. While art is organically present around every corner, gaps remain in the region. With only a couple of exceptions, nonprofit arts organizations center around Lawrenceburg and Batesville. Two of the six counties have none. Additionally, performing arts (other than music) are limited and largely volunteer, and two counties lack museums entirely. Determining whether these are gaps are significant compared with other regions (per capita) is outside scope of this plan but would be interesting to explore.

Support Structures. The state of the arts depends heavily on the support structures in place, which means that we have to understand those functions in order to understand the creative sector. Below are a few of the most important supports for this plan and its implementation.

- **Economic development** across Southeast Indiana benefits greatly from their consistent communication and collaboration. SEI READI and SIRPC provide a structure for this that is clearly valued by all. That said, both the capacity and resources of each county’s economic development vary widely. All would be better off if some resources and expertise of the strongest could be directly used to support the smallest.
- **Tourism and destination management** face capacity challenges throughout the region. One county lacks tourism infrastructure entirely, while others maintain limited programs.

Backbone Highlights

Staffed Art Centers: 1 County + Starts

Local art center or community art school with paid staff

- Batesville Area Arts Council, Ripley
- SEI MakerPlus emerging in Friendship
- Project Hope trying to form, Dearborn
- Still Pointe Art Studio & Gallery and others trying to fill [Pendleton Art Center](#) loss, Ohio

Volunteer Art Centers: 3 Counties

Volunteer organizations that provide classes, exhibits, and artist supports

- Dearborn Highlands Arts Council
- Dillsboro Arts Friendship Gallery, Dearborn
- Franklin County Arts Council
- Community Art Center of Switzerland County

Market & Retail Opportunities: Every County

For-profit boutique, coffee shop, or store selling local art (12 inventoried) plus:

- 4 quilt shops and an alpaca farm
- 4 music stores
- 3 instrument makers/repair shops
- 3 frame shops
- 2 retail galleries
- 2 local bookstores
- Assorted craft shops

Networks Spanning the Region

Membership associations along with informal groups creating networks for makers and artists

- Southeastern Indiana Musicians Association
- Southeastern Indiana Art Guild
- Southeast Indiana Woodturners
- Metamora Performing Arts
- 2 Quilting Guilds in Dearborn

Some counties overly focus on county lines versus potential gains from collaboration. Overall, the region would benefit from better county-to-county connections and access to modern tools like aggregator calendars, mobility data, and updated digital strategies.

- **Main Street programs and downtown improvement initiatives** vary across the region—some are volunteer-led while others, like Lawrenceburg, demonstrate what well-structured programs can accomplish with proper support.

Capacity Needs

Functional Needs. While the sector has a strong base, it struggles in key functional areas:

- **Staffing.** Many of the arts and culture nonprofits (including the historic societies) are all-volunteer organizations. In some locations this indicates a struggle to develop. In Southeast Indiana it's likely the organizations are too new, or the community is struggling for resources. The resulting capacity need is for groups to develop their volunteer base and support a professional face (e.g., "staffing", digital presence, marketing) through volunteers.
- **Connections.** As connected as smaller communities tend to be, the sector often lacks the relationships it needs for success – both within the creative sector and across to others. In focus groups and most visioning sessions, participants realized they'd never met together and promised to start meeting in the future recognizing the potential.
- **Relationships.** The sector needs strong working relationships with key support entities. Primary among these are tourism, Main Street, economic development, and planning. They need the kind of relationships where one can call the other and ask hard questions as trusting colleagues, where they can negotiate each other's needs easily.
- **Marketing.** Marketing was consistently cited as a key weakness – needing to cross-promote, identify new strategies, understand current trends and practices, and improve effectiveness. The sector needs training, partnerships, and resources to have effective social media campaigns, modern websites, media relationships, branded collaterals, representation in aggregator sites, better storytelling, and placement in tourism magazines, etc. Right now, most lack the capacity to make this happen.
- **A Place at the Table.** Overall, the Creative Sector needs a seat at the table in City Hall, the county building, economic development, Main Street, and more. Until they are a given in those, many of the goals and strategies in this plan will struggle.

Indiana Artisans 4 in Southeast

FRANKLIN

[Shari Bartish](#), Ceramics
[Charlene George](#), Painting

RIPLEY

[Robin Dyer](#), Leather
[Roland Rein](#), Baskets



What is [Indiana Artisan](#)?

Indiana Artisan is a statewide nonprofit that elevates a curated network of makers as standard-bearers for Indiana's creative community. It supports artisan entrepreneurs through marketing, retail opportunities, education, and peer networking to help them grow their businesses.



Indiana Artisan Roland "The Basket Man" Rein, Friendship

Funding Needs. Arts & Culture Funding is the number one most cited need, and that **support is needed for current operations, leveling up capacity, and deferred maintenance** before building new capital or programming. This is becoming truer in the current environment of uncertain, shrinking, and disappearing public funding.

Taken a step further, it is important to note the some of the region's counties feel this even more than others. SMU DataArts Arts Vibrancy Index (*below, detail in the Appendix*) highlights some of those differences highlighting the differences among the region's counties. For example, there's a vast difference in "Public Support" between Franklin (43) and Ohio (90), and "Arts Vibrancy" between Dearborn (85) and Union (55).

Indices (Percentile)	Dearborn	Ohio	Ripley	Switzerland	Franklin	Union
Arts Vibrancy Score	85	84	75	73	72	55
Component Scores						
1. Arts Providers	69	74	45	61	41	63
2. Arts Dollars	87	89	72	72	58	49
3. Public Support	90	90	81	49	43	45

Detail in the Appendix, page 121

In the chart below, analysis of state and federal arts-related grants shows fewer federal dollars reaching Southeast Indiana. Although the region makes up 1.84% of the state's population, it receives a smaller per capita share of state arts funding.

Of the total funding, 80% came from covid-related programs. Without that, **virtually no federal arts funding comes into the region.**

Grant Programs	Total Grants Made to IN		Received by SEI Region	% of Total IN
IAC	2019-24	\$ 22,066,309	\$ 217,294	1.0%
ARPA & CARES via IAC	2021-22	\$ 10,873,582	\$ 145,500	1.3%
SVOG	2021	\$139,090,261	\$1,656,391	1.2%
NEA	2019-24	\$ 13,198,447	\$ 50,000	0.4%
NEH	2019-24	\$ 19,330,299	none identified	—
IMLS	2019-24	\$ 29,110,349	none identified	—

Detail in the Appendix, page 125

Community foundations are the most important sources of grant funding for the creative sector across the region. In fact, they are key drivers behind much of what the region has today.

Asset Highlights >150 Pieces of Public Art

MURALS

99 inventoried PLUS [Rising Sun Senior Housing Collection](#), and collections of window murals in communities like Aurora and Lawrenceburg

MULTIPLES

100s of [Freds](#) (Goat statues) in Switzerland Co.
>15 Andrea Grimsley murals in Ohio Co.
A flock of [Roosters](#) in Franklin Co.
3 [New-Deal Murals](#) in Dearborn, Ripley, & Union Co.
2 [Bicentennial Bisons](#) in Ripley & Switzerland Co.

ARTISTS & FABRICATORS

60+ identified including pieces by:

High School Classes and other young artists • local fabricators and woodworkers • 35+ not-yet-attributed



Need help with the abbreviations?

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS
IAC Indiana Arts Commission

FEDERAL COVID-RELIEF PROGRAMS
ARPA American Rescue Plan
CARES Coronavirus Aid, Relief, & Economic Security
SVOG Shuttered Venue Operators Grant

FEDERAL AGENCY PROGRAMS
IMLS Institute of Museum and Library Services
NEA National Endowment for the Arts
NEH National Endowment for the Humanities

Conclusions

The Importance of Investment. Years of limited investment across Southeast Indiana have created accumulated challenges around maintenance and infrastructure in smaller communities and smaller counties. Historically, state funding has primarily gone to large-scale projects, major institutions, and high-density population areas.

Southeast Indiana is lucky to have found a way to fill some of that difference. It has three casinos bringing revenue into the region. Even this comes short. A significant portion of the revenue from one goes to Jefferson County because of the way it was approved at the state level. Another is at risk of relocation out of the region. That leaves only one to count on for the future, the one that has already been providing the largest returns in Dearborn County.

At the same time, small communities often lack the capacity to pursue competitive grants, particularly when they cannot meet match requirements or manage federally sourced funds. Most arts nonprofits – especially smaller ones – have little to no access to state funding beyond arts-specific opportunities for several reasons. As a result, opportunity for growth is limited and gaps in cultural programming exist across the region.

The Importance of Local Leadership One of the most notable observations across the region is the impact of local leadership. Communities with leaders who bring an abundance mindset, ambition for positive change, and authentic connections to act consistently show stronger momentum. Curiosity, creative problem-solving skills, and field expertise make a meaningful difference. This aligns with research findings (*box right*).

The Importance of Collaboration & Scaffolding. The path forward involves embracing collaboration and recognizing how progress builds upon itself.

A "**State of the Arts**" assessment naturally emphasizes broader community factors because the arts thrive when supported by strong infrastructure and collaborative relationships. Gaps in areas like small grant programs, tourism partnerships, shared resources, and broadband affect everyone, including cultural organizations. Addressing these foundational needs creates conditions for growth. By investing thoughtfully, nurturing leadership, fostering collaboration over competition, and building regional connections, Southeast Indiana can create an environment where all communities and their cultural assets flourish.

Digging Deeper into Local Leaders Take Note

Openness is a pathway for positive change, growth, and momentum.

“**Openness to new ideas makes the difference.** The world is changing around all of us, and Iowa State University has been studying what characteristics help communities facing change. They followed 99 small towns for over 20 years. In that time, those towns experienced every kind of change you can name. Some lost a manufacturer; others gained a new business. Some lost a local school, some had big growth in their schools. Some were hit by natural disasters, others were not.

No matter what happened or didn't happen, the towns that came through it the best were the ones that were open to new ideas.

Those were the towns that saw “better economic and demographic outcomes” no matter what change threw at them. ISU Professor David Peters said, “They realize no one is coming to save their town. If their town was going to survive and have a future it was going to be up to them.” It's that openness to new ideas that boosts our resilience.”

Becky McCray, *The Idea Friendly Guide*. (2025)



Rebecca Davies Art, Dillsboro

Defining Success

Vision 2035

County by county and then together as a region this process asked Southeast Indiana to imagine a Vibrant Arts & Culture Future for itself – one that embraces an ***“Arts and” approach***. It intentionally builds from the region’s deeply rooted music and craft traditions, visible history, connection to the Ohio River, and rich natural assets. The aspiration that emerged describes a Southeast region circa 2035 in which:

The Arts are a Thriving, Vital Force that:

Spark Community & Economic Vitality

Arts and culture rise as a unifying force for economic development, youth engagement, and communities. From woodworking and live music to mural festivals, creativity is visible, celebrated, and authentically woven into every community.

Amplify Natural Assets & Regional Tourism

Local stories, trails, waterways, and outdoor spaces are celebrated as shared sources of pride and wellbeing. Strategic marketing, compelling storytelling, and curated tourism packages weave the beauty of the place together with active arts experiences.

Foster Regional Collaboration through Local Leadership

Coordinated leadership plus deep, supportive networks have developed local arts and culture assets, strengthened partnerships, and catalyzed development throughout. The arts are a valued, cohesive sector connecting creatives, nonprofits, and civic leaders.

Are Central to Engaging & Empowering the Next Generation

Arts and culture programming, creative learning, and leadership development have increased retention of the region’s youth while welcoming and supporting families.

And Where Creative Placemaking & Design have Solidified Vibrant Cultural Districts

Our downtowns and main streets are lively hubs where every storefront is filled, restaurants thrive, and walking trails connect residents and visitors to shops, stories, and scenic assets. Beautification efforts and adaptive reuse have sustained the small-town charm we value.

We Grow from Deep Roots –

Cultivating Big Opportunities with Small Town Charm.

SEI READI

2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

ALIGNING VISIONS

“Arts and” recognizes that arts and culture are not separate, but integral to efforts in economic development, tourism, community development and vitality, activating parks, education, and more. Implementation depends on leaders across these sectors working together, with arts and culture seen as a key ingredient for shared success.

This plan fully embraces the region’s vision for economic development, SEI’s aspiration to be: “Brimming with potential and opportunity. The region has a hardworking population, where residents value a strong sense of community. Abundant natural resources dedicated regional collaboration, and a convenient geographical location are among some of the many characteristics that prepare it for long-term economic and population growth..”

We call ourselves the affordable Cincinnati address, as our region has a small town feel with big city amenities.

The arts and culture vision here works hand in glove with that aspiration, ensuring regional success. In the pages that follow, readers will see that alignment in action. Goal, strategy, and outcome excerpts from SEI READI’s plan in boxes like this highlight those connections.



This also aligns with plans reviewed from communities across the region. (See Methodology in Appendix, pages 128-135)

Measuring Success

Because this work is part of READI 2.0 and framed by the LEI Arts & Culture Initiative gift, their **Quality of Place** goals will inform success measures long after those initiatives end. But success for this plan should be more targeted to local needs. ***This plan belongs to the entire region.*** Every community across the region comes to this plan from a different place – with different assets, resource levels, capacity, expertise, and authentic identity. Because of this, the plan assumes that key stakeholders and organizations in each community, as well as SEI READI, will:

1. Periodically Re-Prioritize this Plan's Goals & Strategies
2. Develop Appropriate Action Plans for Implementation
3. Set Developmental Benchmarks and Plans for Measuring Success considering:
 - a. **Arts & Culture Output Documentation**
Any activity tied to any of the plan goals or strategies, engagement of community in the process, and capacity built toward plan goals should be documented and tracked.
 - b. **Arts & Culture Outcome Measures – Proposed**
Each goal in this plan includes a list of proposed success measures – indicators to consider in setting targets toward vision achievement. The region and each community should set benchmarks and steppingstones applicable to their vision for success.
 - c. **Existing Success Measures – SEI READI Benchmarks**
Because the Arts & Culture plan supports the SEI READI Regional Development Plan, it should positively impact those goals and target benchmarks .
 - Building Housing Units
 - Attracting and Retaining Population
 - Increasing Infrastructure Capacity
 - Boosting per Capita Income
 - Increasing Jobs

Implementation Support

This plan includes a toolkit of ideas and inspiration drawn from national and local examples to spark creativity and show what's possible (*beginning on page 103*). These resources align directly with goals and are designed to deepen understanding, build confidence, and equip leaders with the tools they need to translate ideas into action.

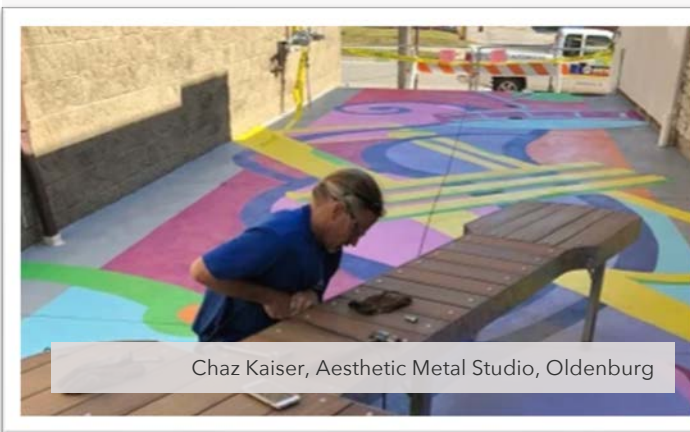
SEI READI

2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

ALIGNING OUTCOMES

Regional economic development targets are:

1. **HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS.** Provide 1,800 new housing units at attainable price points based on annual per capita income earnings
2. **CULTURE, TOURISM, RECREATION & LIFESTYLE.** Preserve, enhance, and activate our communities, destinations, and recreational activities as a frontline resource to grow our regional population by 5,000 residents by 2030
3. **INFRASTRUCTURE.** Increase regional infrastructure capacity and reach by 10% to meet the needs of our current and future residents and businesses
4. **BUSINESS RETENTION, GROWTH, & ATTRACTION.** [Add] 2,500 jobs by 2030 through business recruitment, expansion, and attraction efforts to increase the per capita income by 2.5% per year
5. **CHILD CARE.** Expand access to quality and affordable childcare and early education programs by 10% each year



Chaz Kaiser, Aesthetic Metal Studio, Oldenburg

Goals & Strategies



Window Mural on the Elks Lodge by Adam Gilliam, Lawrenceburg

Introduction

This section begins with an overview of the six goals and how key priorities align with the regional development plan.

From there forward, each goal is presented in detail – with strategies, tactics, proposed measurement indicators, and a clear presentation of its alignment with the regional development plan.

Along the way are resources, recommended tools, and first steps for implementation.

There are even three BIG IDEAs for supersizing implementation and impact as a region.

Plan Guide

While each priority, goal and strategy is intended to be regional in scope, they should be implementable at regional, county, and community levels.



Reminders to the reader.

Each of the priorities, goals and strategies in the Arts & Culture plan are intended to be regional in scope, implemented at regional, county, and community levels.


Residents across the region were asked to prioritize goals and strategies through an online survey.

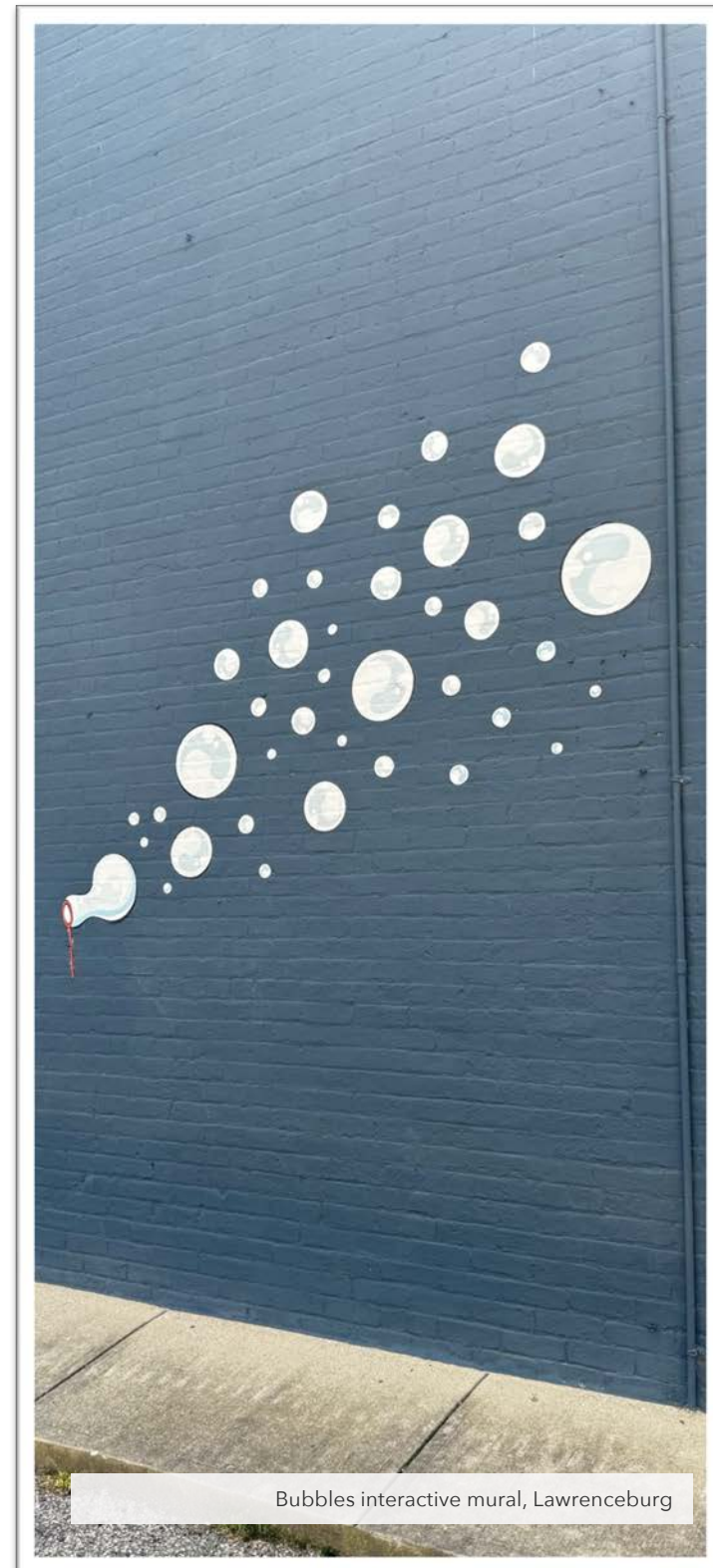
The ones they chose are marked with ★

Document Color Coding

priority • priority • priority
big ideas • counties • appendix • everything else

Overview of Goals by Priority Area

<p>priority PLACE & IDENTITY</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ACTIVATE THE REGION  Revitalize and activate main streets, waterfronts, byways, and hidden gems through arts and culture. Filled with surprises, public art, entertainment, and food they thrive as Cultural Districts – living history hubs blended with creative energy, and small town charm to attract residents and explorers. 2. CONNECT COMMUNITIES Knit the region's Natural & Cultural Assets together (e.g., public art trails, regional program initiatives, and wayfinding design) to amplify and increase access to both, build relationships, and promote place-based discovery, wellness, and tourism.
<p>priority ATTACHMENT & OPPORTUNITY</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. CULTIVATE NEXT GENERATION ROOTS Invest in initiatives with and for the next generation – expanding access to arts programming and education, increasing participation, and opening paths to creative careers. Deeply engaging the next generation in a vibrant Cultural Life will feed talent pipelines while increasing resident retention regionwide. 4. GENERATE CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY Focus on the Art, Artists, & Creation – and opportunities to create – to position the creative sector for success. Generate opportunities with, by, and for artists, creative entrepreneurs, and nonprofits through training, program development, and material supports needed to grow authentically.
<p>priority LEADERSHIP & COLLABORATION</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. MOBILIZE, COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE Collaborate to advance Cultural Development & Regionalism. Systemize collaboration and communication among leaders to align planning, build networks, share resources, and create joint programs to strengthen the region's collective capacity for long-term cultural growth. 6. FORMALIZE SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS Hardwire Arts & Culture Strategy into governance, economic development, funding, and civic frameworks. Embedding arts and culture into plans and policies will ensure their sustainable visibility, investment, and impact.



Bubbles interactive mural, Lawrenceburg

Alignment

While the Arts & Culture Plan goals are an imperfect match with those in the regional development plan, the two plans align in key themes, strategies, and metrics (*described in detail on the coming pages*). Three overarching regional priorities each supported by two goals, provide a balanced framework that addresses the core needs of every focus area (previous page). Similarly, the SEI READI development plan includes six regional goals (*box right*).

Arts & Culture Priorities	Regional Development Plan
Place & Identity	Directly aligned: Creative Placemaking & Preservation Supporting elements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Health, Safety, & Social Services; • Economic Growth Momentum; and • Comprehensive Regional Marketing
Attachment & Opportunity	Directly aligned: Life-Long Learning Supporting elements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Placemaking & Preservation; • Quality Health, Safety, & Social Services; and • Economic Growth Momentum
Leadership & Collaboration	Directly aligned: Economic Growth Momentum Supporting elements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Placemaking & Preservation; • Accessible Housing & Infrastructure; and • Economic Growth Momentum



Excavator Blade Art outside Versailles

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ALIGNING GOALS

The region's six economic development goals are:

- 1. CREATIVE PLACEMAKING & PRESERVATION.** Prioritized as critical to improving quality of life, leveraging built and natural assets, developing resilient communities, spurring economic investment, and ensuring the region remains an attractive location for talent and business.
- 2. ACCESSIBLE HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE.** Improve the accessibility of a variety of housing types in response to a significant need for both new and preserved quality housing.
- 3. QUALITY HEALTH, SAFETY, & SOCIAL SERVICE.** Expand access to essential services and specialized care to improve quality of life throughout the region.
- 4. LIFE-LONG LEARNING.** Support residents through learning opportunities, directly addressing the gap between labor market demands and formal education.
- 5. ECONOMIC GROWTH MOMENTUM.** Maintain momentum as economic growth begins to flourish, especially for select industries.
- 6. COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL MARKETING.** Develop its brand, building on the vision and goals outlined within this regional plan.

ACTIVATE THE REGION

goal 1



Revitalize and activate main streets, waterfronts, byways, and hidden gems through arts and culture. Filled with surprises, public art, entertainment, and food they thrive as **Cultural Districts** – living history hubs blended with creative energy, and small town charm to attract residents and explorers.

Alignment with Regional Development Plan

SEI READI's **Creative Placemaking & Preservation** goal focuses on three asset types: 1) Built, 2) Nature, and 3) Arts, Culture & Community. **Activate the Region** addresses the first and third (*box right*), prioritizing Arts, Culture & Community.

At the same time, it sets the stage for success in **Economic Growth Momentum** and **Comprehensive Regional Marketing** (*detailed later in strategy*).

Success Measures – Proposed

- Façade, alley, and streetscape improvements completed
- Resident survey results show increased pride in downtown
- Increased number of programs
- Underused/vacant properties activated as cultural assets
- Increased foot traffic and increased tourism



SEI READI
2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING & PRESERVATION

The regional plan placemaking goal includes:

ARTS, CULTURE & COMMUNITY ASSETS FOCUS

Promote new community connections through cultural and creative experiences.

SEI seeks to engage community members, artists, business owners, organizations, and local government in the development of quality amenities and activities that leverage and promote arts and culture in the region. ...

Murals and mural trails [and] other amenities to build upon the quality of life and quality of place... SEI strives to create and promote equitable access to quality public spaces and programming, which the community and visitors may interact for shared experiences.

BUILT ASSETS FOCUS

Reimagine and preserve unique spaces.

From community centers, downtowns, and main streets, the region is ripe for reimagination and reinvention. Adaptive reuse strategies will allow the region to preserve unique spaces, and intentional investment will allow respective counties to unlock the vibrancy and beauty of their historic main streets and historical buildings.

Community members ... expressed their desire to preserve the rich history of the region; moreover, ... the historical buildings and landmarks should play a central role in the region's redevelopment into a more attractive destination.

Rising Sun Waterfront

Goal 1 Strategies

1.1 Amplify & Celebrate Distinctive Assets

Revitalize and restore community cores, creating cultural districts where you want to sit down and stay for a while.

tactics

- Create welcoming, walkable environments that spark **pride** while creating a sense of **place** and **discovery**
 - Programs to maintain and beautify façades, alleys, and streetscapes (e.g., small matching grants)
 - Intentionally designed signage, gateways, and zoning standards
 - Landscaping, lighting, design features (e.g., awnings where there are no trees), and public art
- Revitalize core areas as well as smaller communities through preservation and **creative reuse** of existing assets
 - Leverage arts to restore and creatively reuse **historic buildings** as mixed use creative hubs (e.g., arts venues, co-working and creative businesses)
 - Transform **underused properties** into cultural assets (e.g., pop-up exhibit, retail, and restaurant opportunities)
 - Beautify and activate **open, visible spaces** such as alleys and abandoned sites ('brownfields') (e.g., gardens and pocket parks)

1.2 Activate with Public Art & Programming

Bring main streets, waterfronts, and byways to life year-round with arts, culture, and community programming.

tactics

- Install, enhance, or revitalize **public art** in strategic locations to reinforce identity and animate gathering places
- Expand **programming** across all seasons (e.g., markets, concerts, temporary art installations, winter festivals)
- Partner with **business, youth, and artists to host** arts and culture activities (e.g., live music, art displays, artist talks, open mic)
- Bring celebrated **traditions and living history to life** through art, storytelling, and place-based interpretation. Historical societies, libraries, and tourism bureaus collaborate to highlight shared heritage (e.g., Black History, historic districts and towns, music, traditional arts) within and across county boundaries via: Interpretive signage, Walking tours, and Digital storytelling (e.g., QR codes, digital media)



Digging Deeper to Activate the Region

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Façade and beautification incentive programs
- Creating a Cultural District
- Adding to the [Public Art Archive](#)

RECOMMENDED TOOLS

- [The Power of 10+](#) See Recommended Tool: Cultivating P.L.A.C.E. on page 40.
- [America in Bloom](#) promotes and builds vibrant and sustainable communities through volunteerism and education emphasizing flowers, plants, trees, heritage, and environmental and lifestyle enhancements (see page 106).
- [Better Block](#) is a great placemaking source including free downloadable designs to activate a downtown space.



Ecco Lawn Chair
([Wikiblock](#) design from [Better Block in a Box](#))



Looking for more?

Check out The Toolkit (pages 103-116), where you will find more on these and other ideas.

CONNECT COMMUNITIES

goal 2

Knit the region's **Natural & Cultural Assets** together (e.g., public art trails, regional program initiatives, and wayfinding design) to amplify and increase access to both, build relationships, and promote place-based discovery, wellness, and tourism.

Alignment with Regional Development Plan

SEI READI's **Creative Placemaking & Preservation** goal focuses on three asset types: 1) Built, 2) Nature, and 3) Arts, Culture & Community. **Connect Communities** explicitly links the second and third (*box right*), prioritizing Arts, Culture & Community.

Doing so, supports the Wellness through Recreation elements of **Quality Health, Safety, & Social Services** and sets the stage for success in **Economic Growth Momentum** and **Comprehensive Regional Marketing** (*detailed later in strategy*).

Success Measures – Proposed

- Artist/city collaborations to create wayfinding that integrates community identity
- Partnerships among relevant sectors, organizations, and groups
- Cultural trails or corridor routes extended, connected, or established
- Sites activated for creative programming, exhibitions, or performances
- Increase in trail usage
- Cost savings through shared tools (e.g., Placer.ai, Yodel)
- Visitors attending multi-county or packaged cultural-tourism experiences

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2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING & PRESERVATION

The regional plan placemaking goal also includes:

NATURAL ASSETS FOCUS

Raise awareness and leverage the region's natural assets. The Southeast Indiana landscape delights its residents. ... Leveraging the region's state parks, scenic corridors, and abundant waterfronts is a critical strategy for Southeast Indiana. It's important that these natural assets be protected, and that environmental awareness is improved. Water and sewer infrastructure, for example, is necessary to address high-priority environmental issues.

FROM OTHER GOALS

While other goals from the regional plan include:


WELLNESS THROUGH RECREATION

Invest in recreational opportunities to support both resident and visitor interests. These are the same assets that attract talent and visitors. The region should focus investment to enhance diverse recreational opportunities in a region already rich in natural treasures.

REGIONAL BRAND

Create a clear and widely embraced regional brand. In collaboration with regional stakeholders, SEI READI will examine the public image of Southeast Indiana and work together to further develop a regional brand.

Goal 2 Strategies

2.1  **Amplify & Activate Nature in Combination with Cultural Assets**
Leverage the region's unique geography, natural and cultural assets to connect communities, creativity, and recreation.

- tactics**
- a) **Create thematic, experience "trails"** (e.g., walks, drives, weekends) with designed wayfinding, public art, and intentional connections to key cultural and recreational destinations (e.g., physically connecting trail segments as well as adding bike lanes, mapping, signage)
 - b) Activate **waterfronts and byways and the small towns along the way** with creative programming, exhibitions, and performances that encourage exploration and economic activity

2.2 **Build Regional Tourism**
Develop regional tourism strategies that tell compelling stories from the region in collaboration with the creative sector.

- tactics**
- a) Develop and deepen **regional relationships and strategies** to support cross-promotion, cross-county marketing, and shared expertise
 - b) Develop **shared marketing assets** that increase local capacity and efficiency while reducing costs (*box right*)
 - Develop agreed-upon **methods** for marketing key assets (e.g., ALL use [Public Art Archive](#) versus locally created GIS maps)
 - Collectively purchase of **tools** (e.g., Placer.ai data subscription) to reduce overall costs
 - Mirror **content** county-to-county, city-to-city (e.g., Yodel) to make the most of limited staff capacity
 - Develop a regional **website** aggregating arts and culture opportunities for more complete and effective information sharing
 - c) Intentionally package and promote **experiences** that link the region's:
 - Natural destinations (e.g., Perfect Slopes, Brookville Lake, Ohio River, Whitewater Canal, state parks) **with**
 - Arts, culture, and heritage assets (*see Big Idea 1 for more*) **and**
 - Downtown and waterfront activities (e.g., festivals, concerts, tours, shopping, and downtown charm)

Digging Deeper to Connect Communities

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Don't forget your local libraries. These community cornerstones and often ***the*** anchor for arts and culture in smaller communities. They're also skilled programmers, partners, and convenors and a key asset for building better communities.

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2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

CULTURE, TOURISM, RECREATION & LIFESTYLE

The regional plan tourism etc. goal includes:

- Utilize the Ohio River Way as a resource to connect, regionally market, fund and redevelop our region's river towns.
- Enhance the public's access to and enjoyment of public waterways, parks, open spaces, nature preserves, cultural facilities, and interpretive programming through the development of trails, pathways, and enhanced amenities.
- Encourage collaboration toward a cohesive and shared Southeast Indiana regional brand among tourism bureaus and EDOs in our region for talent attraction.

The READI 2.0 revisions to SEI's regional plan, including the above directly speak to Goal 2 here.



Recommended Tools for Goals 1 & 2

Cultivating P.L.A.C.E.

- P: [The Power of 10](#)** The Project for Public Spaces Power of 10 theory is a great place to start. It's a simple but very effective way to think about creating thriving places. Essentially, the idea is that **a region needs 10 great destinations, each destination needs 10 unique places, and each place needs at least 10 things to do, see, or experience.**
- L: [Locals](#)** To create a vibrant and sustainable destination, never start with the tourists. Prioritizing the engagement and enjoyment of locals when activating spaces is a more effective foundation. Creating places and amenities for residents prepares these areas for potential elevation to destination marketing status – if that is what the community desires. Without enough locals loving an asset, it won't last. Regardless of how great your mountain bike trail network is, having a reliable group of local volunteers to help maintain and protect it is essential if it's going to be a sustainable destination. The same goes for your Main Street organization's programming, boutique retail shop, or restaurant. A locally sourced burger with a story about the farmer or chef from a business ooooooozing local character is a compelling reason to exit the highway and go beyond the fast food chains along the interstate. Also pie. I love pie."
- A: [Assets & Attractions](#)** These are tangible things. A museum, a park, a fountain, a mural, a food truck, a farmers' market, a big tree, a quiet path ... Anything can be elevated from an asset to an attraction. Make a list of all the things. Make lots of lists. Natural assets, dining assets, historic assets, arts, music, what else?
- C: [Cultural Connection](#)** Does this thing feel like it's from this place? You can get barbeque or visit a farmers' market in many places, but are there enough connections to the local people and cultural history to make it feel like this place? For example, where I'm from, George Washington apparently slept a lot of places. Each one of those places has a similar but slightly different way of integrating that history into its unique experience.
- E: [Experiences](#)** [This](#) is the real measure of success. A memorable and shareable experience with a place emerges when everything mentioned above comes together. Are your assets loved and cared for in a way that elevates them to an attraction? Whether it's a bustling town square or a quiet copse of pine trees in the middle of a national forest, have you created a compelling way for people to engage with it? Is it done in a way that makes them feel connected to the place? To the experience, they are having in it?

Above article: [How do places become places people love to be?](#) (Hersick + Webster Creative Partners, 2023)

Digging Deeper to Jumpstart Your Placemaking

- 1. Start with Petunias.**
In other words, keep it [Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper](#), and visible for early, obvious wins.
- 2. They Always Say, "It Can't Be Done."**
Don't believe it.
- 3. Engage Community**
Involve residents in planning and decision-making, so that projects reflect local values and needs – fostering ownership and community bonds.
- 4. Collaborate Across Sectors**
Partner with other sectors – local businesses, government agencies, and nonprofits – to pool resources and expertise, amplifying your impact.
- 5. Use Asset-Based Development**
Identify and use local talents, traditions, and resources. This builds on what the community already has, leading to sustainable development.
- 6. Be Flexible & Adaptable**
Be open to evolving ideas and feedback. This allows projects to remain relevant and responsive to changing community dynamics.
- 7. Focus on Quality of Place**
Make public spaces more inviting and functional. Parks, community centers, and public art enhancements boost pride and attract newcomers.

This is a compilation of ideas from:

- 1) [Eleven Principles for Creating Great Community Places](#),
- 2) [Rural Placemaking and the Thrive Rural Framework](#),
- 3) [Creative Placemaking Resources](#), 4) [Placemaking, Wikipedia](#)

CULTIVATE NEXT GENERATION ROOTS

goal 3

Invest in initiatives with and for the next generation – expanding access to arts programming and education, increasing participation, and opening pathways to creative careers. Deeply engaging the next generation in a vibrant **Cultural Life** will feed talent pipelines while increasing resident retention across the region.

Alignment with Regional Development Plan

SEI READI's **Life-Long Learning** goal focuses on three life stages: 1) Childcare and Early Education, 2) K-12 Pathways, and 3) Adult Education & Upskilling. **Cultivate Next Generation Roots** focuses most directly on K-2 pathways (*box right*) but also touches on the other two.

Doing so, supports the rationale behind the Wellness through Recreation elements of **Quality Health, Safety, & Social Services**, continues to build arts, culture and community assets tied to **placemaking**, and sets the stage for success in **Economic Growth Momentum** (*detailed later in strategy*).

Success Measures – Proposed

- Internships, apprenticeships, or mentorships created and filled
- Youth serving on boards, committees, or councils
- Youth-driven initiatives launched or supported
- Schools integrating creative career pathways
- Arts offerings tailored to under-40
- Arts participation by ages 20-30

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2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

The regional plan life-long learning goal includes:

K-12 PATHS TO SUCCESS FOCUS

Improve K-12 school competitiveness and strengthen pathways to in-demand and growing industry jobs. Intentional investment in K-12 schools is possibly one of the most valuable economic development strategies in terms of talent attraction and development. When a young family is looking to move, the quality of K-12 educational opportunities is a significant factor – sometimes, the most important factor. Southeast Indiana has some great schools. However, as a rural region there are substantial struggles for funding. Southeast Indiana needs to be competitive in curriculum, programming, teacher pay, and pathways that will lead to student success. Cooperation and support between schools and local employers is critical to this process.

Underscoring the importance of the next generation of this region, recall that its counties are **3-10 years older than the state at the median**. Without an influx and retention of residents 40 and younger, the region will shrink and face larger challenges.



Regional Outcome Targets include:

3,000 new residents (2.3% growth)
285 new direct jobs
175 new indirect jobs

This goal will be important to reaching those targets

Goal 3 Strategies

3.1



Expand Arts Opportunity

Increase access to meaningful arts and culture experiences for all ages.

tactics

- Create safe and affordable **third spaces** – places to create and perform, socialize and share – in **every** community (e.g., coffee shop, library, community center, park)
- Directly work with the next generation to **co-design / co-lead** programming according to their creative wants and needs
- Youth **engagement** is prioritized through art recognition in schools, STEAM programming, and intergenerational creative initiatives
- Expand arts program offerings to engage each community and to reach young audiences where they are:
 - Targeted offerings for **under-forty** and intergenerational audiences (e.g., youth plays based on senior stories)
 - Arts programming integrated into **non-arts spaces** (e.g., community events, parks) to be hubs of intergenerational activity
 - Exhibits, performances, and **showcases** for budding talent

3.2

Empower Youth Engagement & Volunteerism

Build a culture that welcomes and empowers civic engagement of youth, young adults, and young families.

tactics

- Intentionally **empower** formal (e.g., youth councils, board positions, training) and informal (e.g., finding and supporting the party planners and doers who make things happen) forms of **youth leadership**
- Actively support **youth-driven initiatives** and involve them in community decision-making (e.g., surveys, committee roles)
- Ensure participation is **welcoming and accessible** for any project or engagement (e.g., adapting meetings times)

3.3

Build Creative Career Pathways

Connect high school and college-aged youth to arts opportunities, skill-building, and pathways to creative careers

tactics

- Integrate **creative career pathways** into K-12, after-school, community, and higher education programs
- Establish **intern and mentorships** (apprenticeships) that connect students and creatives to the business community for skill-building (e.g., arts administration, instrument repair, media production, web design, sound engineering)



Resource to Get Started on 3.2. See Aim's [Youth Councils Network](#). And more examples for 3.3. Juxtaposition Arts (MN) – [youth-focused](#), ArtMix Urban Artisans – [vocational and social](#), New Castle Career Center – [broadcast, design](#)

Your Input

View from the Survey

“... a mention about **fostering volunteerism**. It is **the life blood of small communities** for people to get involved, and through that involvement you not only get sense of **contributing to someone greater than self**, but you fall in love with your own back yard the people in it.

Individual response from the regional survey used to provide feedback on the plan's vision, goals, and strategies.

Digging Deeper into Next Generation Roots

Key strategies from the SEI READI regional development plan can be leveraged for this goal, include:

- JAG Expansion via SEIWIB & Eastern IN Works
- Genesis: Pathways to Success
- Job Building for the Future

GENERATE CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY

goal 4

Focus on the **Art, Artists, & Creation** – and opportunities to create – to position the creative sector for success. Generate opportunities with, by, and for artists, creative entrepreneurs, and cultural nonprofits through training, program development, and material supports needed to grow authentically.

Alignment with Regional Development Plan

This goal targets three elements of the SEI READI plan:

- Adult Education & Upskilling in **Life-Long Learning** (*box right*)
- Entrepreneurship & Innovation in **Economic Growth Momentum** (*box right*)
- Arts, Culture & Community Assets in **Creative Placemaking & Preservation**

Goal 4 supports each of the goals leading with by, and for the region’s creative sector.

Success Measures – Proposed

- Affordable spaces established or sustained (e.g., studios, makerspaces)
- Retail opportunities for artists (pop ups, art fairs, art on walls in business)
- Artists/creative businesses connected to Indiana Small Business Development Center

SEI READI 2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

ECONOMIC GROWTH MOMENTUM

The regional plan economic growth goal includes:

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION FOCUS

Leverage the region’s entrepreneurial culture as a catalyst for startups and innovation.

Southeast Indiana recognizes that the most effective way to unlock the regional economy is to create an environment where innovators, risk takers, and entrepreneurs can flourish. With intentional commitment and investment, the region can provide programs, resources, and technical service to the next generation of business leaders in Southeast Indiana.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

The regional plan life-long learning goal also includes:

ADULT EDUCATION & UPSKILLING FOCUS

Provide training for in-demand skills and occupations that support the region’s economic priorities.

A regional economy is only as strong as the people producing. Southeast Indiana recognizes that attracting and developing talent is the most effective way to grow the regional economy and create wealth for the residents of the represented communities.

An intentional effort to provide training for in-demand skills and jobs will ensure the future success of the Southeast Indiana economy. The region will prioritize programming that increases wages, job readiness, self-sufficiency, and resiliency.

Goal 4 Strategies

4.1



Expand Access to Space for Creatives

Develop the spaces artists and creative entrepreneurs need to live, work, and showcase their talents

tactics

- Develop and sustain **affordable spaces** for creatives (e.g., shared studios, co-work, and makerspaces)
- Facilitate **retail opportunities** (e.g., arts trails, curated arts markets, community box office, vendor space at events) that reduce start-up risk and encourage sustainable growth.
- Encourage **cooperatives** to collectively co-market (artist cooperative gallery, regional online store, shared studios, or makerspaces)

4.2

Empower Creative Capacity

Provide artists, creative entrepreneurs, and nonprofits with the resources, training, and infrastructure they need to thrive.

tactics

- Connect creative businesses and artists to existing state, local, and related **support systems** for:
 - Small Businesses (e.g., incubators, SBA, Chambers, Main Street, Ivy Tech, Extension) and
 - Artists (See “Artists & Creative Businesses,” pages 109-110)
- Develop tools and training to fill **unmet needs** of artists and creative businesses:
 - Material (e.g., microloans, grants, tool libraries)
 - Apprenticeship (matching emerging and established artists, creatives, and/or businesses – e.g., [Traditional Arts Indiana](#))
- Supports for **up-skilling** particularly in digital commerce (e.g., training, micro-grants)

4.3

Grow Teaching & Learning

Expand local and regional opportunities for practitioners to teach arts and culture in programs for all ages

tactics

- Support programs that contract with and provide **visibility to artists** (e.g., residencies in schools, libraries, and parks,)
- New educational programs** to share craft and knowledge across generations (e.g., summer lake institute).
- Rosters and databases** for artist referrals, teachers, and mentors

Digging Deeper to Generate Creative Opportunity

Key strategies from the regional development plan that can be leveraged for this goal, include:

Switzerland County Technology & Education Center
Co-Work Initiative • NEXT Community • Hub &
Spoke Institute • Southeast Indiana Maker Network •
Culinary Hospitality Project

Local Authors Fair

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Saturday, April 12
Lawrenceburg
Main Library
150 Mary St., Lawrenceburg, IN

Gena Stonefield will read with her therapy dog Wenli at 11 a.m. plus more therapy dogs at 11:30 a.m.!

Aleigh K. Dean & Cindy Tanner will talk about writing romance books at 11:30 a.m.

Jeff Suess will talk about the book "Pete Rose: A Tribute to a Baseball Legend" at 1:00 p.m.

H.T. Martineau will talk about her new Dungeons & Dragons core book / game at 1:00 p.m.

Annual Local Authors Fair, 42 in 2025!

by a D&D game!



Recommended Tools for Goals 3 & 4

What do Indiana Artists Need?

Below are key findings from the [2023-24 Indiana Arts Commission Artist Needs Assessment](#), which reinforce the goals in this plan – research that can be used to advocate for programmatic support in implementation.

Networks & Connections

Artists want to build more connections with artists. Artists want to build more relationships and connections with other artists, within and beyond their respective disciplines. They want mentors, resources to find local artists, recurring opportunities to meet other artists, and community hubs dedicated to creatives to spark organic networks and relationships. Networks and connections were seen as vital to career success and the ability to grow locally.

Marketing Support & Education

Artists need marketing support (resources, platforms, education). Marketing is a challenge for many artists. Social media marketing is considered time-consuming with little return, and artists see a lack local resources outside social media to advertise and champion local artists. Technical assistance and educational resources about marketing emerged as priorities.

Financial Support & Education

Artists need resources and guidance to strengthen their financial footing while pursuing their art. Artists find a recurring tension between creativity and financial stability that limits their artistic practice. Challenges such as inconsistency of cash flow, health insurance, cost of materials, and time for business planning are key drivers that build tension between creativity and financial stability. The time and stress of running a business as an artist often meant the need for multiple part-time positions or a full-time position to subsidize their artistic career.

Local Investments in Local Artists

Local government and organization support are critical to artists. Artists view local government and local organizations as critical catalysts for artists' careers and artist retention. Public art, local festivals, and local performing and exhibiting opportunities are essential resources, particularly for young artists, and lay the groundwork for local artist growth, as well as public engagement. Artists emphasize the importance of government and organizations prioritizing support, resources, and opportunities for artists working locally.

Digging Deeper into Business Training for Artists

Springboard for the Arts – [Work of Art](#)
 Minerva Financial Arts – [Financial Education](#)
 Center for Cultural Innovation – [Business of Art](#)
 Artists Thrive – [National Resource Hub](#)
 Indiana Arts Commission – [Artist Services Hub](#)



See also the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation's [Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Playbook 3.0](#)

More resources and programs in The Toolkit, pages 103-116.

“More than many other occupations, networks have an incredibly powerful influence on the trajectory of artists' careers.”

“... not only the functional dependencies that artists have on one another to produce creative products but also the social dependencies many artists have with one another that help them get their next gig and build a reputation.”

Woronkowicz, Joanna.
 Artists at Work: Rethinking Policy for Artistic Careers
 (Culture and Economic Life) (2025) (pages 49–50).

MOBILIZE, COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE

goal 5

Collaborate to advance *Cultural Development & Regionalism*. Systemize collaboration and communication among county and regional leaders to align planning, build networks, share resources, and create joint programs to strengthen the region’s collective capacity for long-term cultural growth.

Alignment with Regional Development Plan

SEI READI’s **Comprehensive Regional Marketing** goal has two components: 1) Regional Brand and 2) Collaborative Planning (*box right*). **Mobilize, Collaborate & Communicate** is entirely focused on collaborative planning and success – all boats rise when we work together. At the same time, it expands beyond tourism or a regional brand to supports the capacity of the creative sector.

Success Measures – Proposed

- Creative sector partners that regularly participate in meetups
- Active cross-sector partners engaged in community conversations per county
- Regional, creative sector meetups by type and frequency (artists, nonprofits)
- Average attendance and diversity of participants (artists, nonprofit, county)
- Partnerships, joint projects, or initiatives from network and cross-sector activities
- Counties with regular, cross-sector “community conversations” convenings
- Annual, regionwide, convening held

SEI READI

2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

The regional plan also includes:

Develop marketing plan with tactics focused on tourism, entrepreneurship, and talent attraction. Southeast Indiana is dedicated to collaborative processes for updating local planning documents and removing barriers for those already seeking to be in the region. SEI READI will seek more collaboration across county lines to ensure that existing marketing dollars have a greater impact.

SEI READI is considering additional projects to support this strategy, such as: SEI Digital Business Marketing & Inclusion Platform

Your Input View from the Survey

“**Collaborate, Communicate and Support each County all the way down** to the Pop Up shops. Encourage individuals from the Large Businesses to the Individual and Small Businesses to gather together to help each other succeed. Once you do this, it will come back to support you.

Individual response from the regional survey used to provide feedback on the plan’s vision, goals, and strategies.

Goal 5 Strategies

5.1 Mobilize Mutual Support Networks

Build support networks that facilitate resource sharing, joint programming, skill-building, and plan alignment region-wide.

- tactics**
- a) Commit to regular (weekly-monthly), **EASY, face-to-face meetups and mixers** within the creative sector
 - Artists (e.g., studio visits, after hours social network)
 - Arts, Culture & History Nonprofits (e.g., Coffee & Calendars)
 - b) Develop creative sector **support networks** (e.g., art associations, guilds, informal groups) and initiatives to foster collaboration, communication, and resource sharing among and between artists, makers, and organizations
 - c) Curate **cross-sector interactions** – conferences attendance, projects, dinners – where the experience organically leads to new relationships, ideas, and initiatives with the creative sector (e.g., road-trip idea and community foundation support)

5.2 Expand Implementation Capacity

Build sustainable implementation capacity within the creative sector through leadership development and dedicated staff.

- tactics**
- a) Balance grassroots **"mini projects" AND large** signature events to maximize impact and avoid volunteer burnout
 - b) Where possible, transition from **volunteer to staffed** and from informal to formal (especially in tourism and main streets)
 - c) **Sustain volunteerism** with next generation recruitment and training coupled with cross-sector partnership to expand capacity



Digging Deeper to Mobilize, Collaborate & Communicate

“We’ve already heard from leaders who’ve said, “I didn’t know these cultural assets or these creatives were in this region.” Those new relationships are already beginning to bring about regional change.

– Miah Michaelsen
Executive Director to the Indiana Arts Commission

Your Input View from the Survey

“Help each community FOCUS, uncover, express, and expand their own "unique cultural personality" through art, nature, performance, education and local art and cultural events.

This then creates community awareness, pride, collaboration, mentoring, volunteerism, servant leadership...which then delivers tourism, retention, and placemaking.

Once those individually unique community cultural and arts personalities are better homed in, clear and vibrant, I would help to connect them through **collective regional storytelling** that invites experiential exploration. It's about first identifying and polishing what's truly special locally, then weaving it into a shared cultural narrative that supports and uplifts the whole region.

Individual response from the regional survey used to provide feedback on the plan's vision, goals, and strategies.

5.³ ★ Catalyze a Regionwide Arts & Culture Movement

Strengthen the region's capacity for arts and culture success through cross-sector collaboration, communication, and the power of celebrating together.

tactics

- a) Facilitate understanding between the region's **tourism and creative sectors** to align goals and leveraging best practices
- b) Facilitate cross-sector communication **within each county**, sowing the seeds for organic partnership, resource sharing, as well as arts and culture initiatives throughout the region (e.g., Community Council in Franklin County, lunch and share-out "community conversation") ideally hosted by the community foundation or similarly situated entity)
- c) **Convene all** established and newly established individual sector and cross-sector networks and groups – spanning creative, cultural (history and libraries), tourism, civic (community foundations and Main Streets), and other sectors – at least annually to:
 - Celebrate the State of the Arts, Annual Arts Awards, and other regional successes
 - Share data and promote regional efforts within and outside the region
 - Spark innovation, plan future arts and culture strategy, and foster regionalism
 - Leverage networks to identify key themes, collective actions, data sharing to keep the momentum going



Franklin County Arts Council, Brookville

FORMALIZE SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS

goal 6

Hardwire Arts & Culture Strategy into governance, economic development, funding, and civic frameworks. Embedding arts and culture into local and regional plans and policies will ensure their sustainable visibility, investment, and impact.

Alignment with Regional Development Plan

As the final goal, **Formalize Sustainable Commitments** doesn't target one or more of SEI READI's regional development goals – though the Broadband focus in **Accessible Housing & Infrastructure** is critically important to the arts and culture strategy. Instead, it recognizes that success – sustainable success – can only be achieved if there is process here. In that way, it undergirds each of the goals in this strategy document as well as those in the regional development plan.

Success Measures – Proposed

- New champions and institutional partners (e.g., mayors, schools, civic groups)
- Percent for Art and related policies adopted
- Government-appointed arts councils established
- Arts representation at non-arts sector tables (e.g., boards, committees)
- New funding mechanisms or partnerships established (e.g., city-based small grant programs, donor-advised funds, endowment matches, dedicated revenue streams)

SEI READI

2021–2030 Regional Development Plan

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING & PRESERVATION

The regional plan placemaking goal:

Prioritizes placemaking as critical to improving quality of life, leveraging built and natural assets, developing resilient communities, spurring economic investment, and ensuring the region remains an attractive location for talent and business. Project for Public Spaces defines placemaking by the following:

*“Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a **collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value.***

*More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates **creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.***”

SEI READI has outlined strategies to achieve this goal within the following topics:

- Built Assets
- Natural Assets
- Arts, Culture, and Community Assets

This is the focus of the Arts & Culture Plan.



The “hardwired” concept was inspired by *“In London, we have been on our own mission, working to future-proof our city as a world creative capital, hardwiring culture into the fabric of our city – and planning is at the heart of our work.”* Quote from Forward to [The Routledge Handbook of Urban Cultural Planning](#) (2025).

Goal 6 Strategies

6.1 Build Support for Arts & Culture Strategy

Expand the pool of community champions, leaders, and volunteers actively committed to arts and culture strategy.

- tactics**
- a) Engage key leaders as **champions** (e.g., mayors, foundation executives, civic boards) then expand pool through **civic institutions** such as libraries, Purdue Extension (4H), schools, and Rotaries
 - b) Encourage **businesses** to directly engage with local creatives (e.g., exhibits, commissions, performances, sponsorships)

6.2 Build a Supportive Public Policy Infrastructure

Formalize local government policy and practice that directly support – and limit those that hinder – arts and culture strategy.

- tactics**
- a) Adopt **Percent for Art and related** policies (e.g., food & beverage tax, public art guidelines and plans, design code, designated outdoor refreshment area) that create opportunity and support the creative sector (also, simplify and streamline policies that create barriers to success)
 - b) Institute government-appointed **arts councils and small grant programs** in alignment with city goals
 - c) Commit to **direct representation of the creative sector** in public processes to center arts strategies in future plans (e.g., Main Street, tourism, historic preservation, economic development, and infrastructure)

6.3 ★ Secure Sustainable Funding

Cultivate and solidify a diversified approach to long-term arts and culture support and investment

- tactics**
- a) Designate **public funds** and revenue streams that demonstrate commitment to arts and culture (e.g., portion of hotel/lodging tax, portion of utility or telecommunication fees, local sales tax, budget line item)
 - b) Cultivate **local philanthropy** with each county's community foundation (e.g., donor advised funds, endowment matches, donor engagement)
 - c) Pursue **grants** for arts initiatives while leveraging public, private, and corporate match opportunities, such as those found in The Toolkit
 - d) Advocate for supportive **state and federal** policies, grants, and programs that reinforce local investment (e.g., legislated cultural district incentives)

Digging Deeper Formalize Sustainable Commitments

The Recommendation

Explore the policy ideas on page 51 along with grant information in The Toolkit (page 112). Then dive into public funding mechanisms such as:

- Percent for Art in Development
- [Food & Beverage Tax](#) IC 6.9.27.3
- [County Innkeeper Tax](#) IC 6.9.18
- [Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area](#) IC 7.1.3.31



Rylee's Earrings at market, Liberty



Recommended Tools for Goals 5 & 6

Actions Local Government Can Take to Strengthen Community *through* the Creative Sector

Establish Key Supports:

- Designate staff – a point of contact between local government and the creative community
- Charter a local arts commission, board, or council within local government
- Develop grant programs to support the development of arts organizations and arts events

Provide Programs in Partnership with:

- Local arts to provide programs for underserved populations
- Main Street on pop up visual arts and live music events
- The Boys & Girls Club or parks department on out of school arts programs for youth
- The library, area agency on aging or other community partners on programming for vulnerable populations such as older adults

Commit Resources for:

- Commissioning public art and murals
- Visual / performing arts in local parks, greenspaces, farmers markets, other public spaces
- Events to bring community together such as street dances or community performances

Adopt Ordinances & Policies that:

- Designate funds for arts – general funds or non-tax (e.g., Percent for Art, energy) sources
- Support creative efforts such as murals and outdoor performances
- Establish a cultural district or a creative or cultural hub
- Support community events such as artist markets, concerts or festivals and public art installations such as murals and sculptures (e.g., right-of-way guidelines and processes)

Actively Engage the Creative Sector:

- Include creative entrepreneurs in the local small business community.
- Putting creatives on boards and commissions and asking them to serve on task forces
- Involve the creative sector in economic and community development planning

Or Maybe...

- Support the development of artist studios and creative makerspaces
- Decommission surplus equipment or buildings for creative use

Digging Deeper into Policy Options

EXPLORE STATE & LOCAL LEGISLATION

Advisory Boards & Commissions (Arts Councils)
 Zoning Overlay Districts (Cultural or Design)
 Public Art Guidelines and Master Plans
 Right-of-Way Guidelines
 Special Permitting for Pop Ups

INCLUDE THE SECTOR IN PLANNING FOR:

Regional Development Authorities and CEDS
 Economic Development (City, County, Region)
 Comprehensive Plans (City and County)
 Downtown Development & Revitalization
 Tourism (Commissions, CVBs, DMOs)
 Workforce Development
 Trails, Bike + Pedestrian, Parks & Recreation
 Innovation and TIF Districts
 Public Transportation and Safety
 Quality of Life, Quality of Place, & CBAPs
 Public Libraries, Community & Senior Centers
 Purdue Extension (County and Region)
 Strategy for Community Foundation, Main Street,
 Chamber of Commerce, College or University,
 United Way, Council on Aging, etc.

AND ALWAYS

Make the case that arts and creativity have significant positive impacts on Indiana's people and places



Have arts and creative inspiration and information sent to your inbox: <https://www.in.gov/arts/about/news/>.

Recommendations from the [Indiana Arts Commission](#).

The BIG Ideas

Overview

Shaped by community input and grounded in regional assets, strengths, and themes, these bold, high impact BIG IDEA opportunities are designed to elevate the plan for maximum impact. Secondary to the goals and strategies above, they are *“What if?” opportunities for long-term, whole-region advancement* versus short-term project recommendations. Since great change requires enthusiasm and commitment, these are offered for exploration and consideration.

1. ALL-IN MARKETING:

Art Connected to Nature



What would it look like to go “all-in” – to **showcase incredible natural assets** like the Ohio River Way, Versailles State Park, and Monarch Preserve **alongside a treasure trove of cultural attractions and sites**? Imagine a **shared regional marketing strategy** across multiple platforms that creates a clear “brand” or sense of united identity centered on art and nature.

2. FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE REGION:

Indiana’s Music Corridor

Celebrating **southeastern Indiana’s deep musical roots** – from Richmond, [birthplace of recorded jazz](#) to Madison’s [“music city”](#) – this corridor would showcase both the region’s incredible musical legacy and today’s vibrant culture. The bookends are strong but make no sense without the region in-between. **Music is in Southeast Indiana’s DNA**. Musicians celebrate, support, share, and mentor one another, and there’s no shortage of venues for folks to play – from backyards and bars to senior centers and event centers.

3. DEEP TRADITIONS & PRACTICE:

The Region as Folk School

Rooted in its legacy of music, craft, and making, Southeast Indiana has **the ingredients to become a nationally recognized center for folks arts learning**. By establishing a folk school or a network of creative learning centers, the region can foster creative careers and lifelong learners while strengthening local businesses.



90 Proof Twang, Union County Harvest Fest, Liberty

Next Steps

When it comes to Big Idea implementation, the following steps are recommended. Key is taking a community engaged approach to build buy-in, momentum, and maximize results.

First. Get the rest of the plan up and running, network groups meeting, and past the region's first convening so that new expectations are starting to form.

Once that's done, start small, develop, test, improve with cross-sector partners.

1. **Start the conversation** with individual leaders, expand to facilitated groups, and identify interest for further exploration.
2. **Deeply explore** the options with traction via brainstorming sessions, site visits, and conversations with other communities.
3. **Hone the idea** – continue to ask for input (think public survey, open house, etc.) to build interest – and develop cross-sector implementation plans.

Recommended Partners Beyond the Region

Big Idea #1 – Art Connected to Nature. Partner with [Ohio River Way](#). Its coalition is bringing focus to the Ohio River Basin for conservation, tourism, investment, and more. It is a natural partner, provided SEI READI retains focus on the region's interior and those communities.

Big Idea #2 – Indiana's Music Corridor. Partner with adjacent regions. Meet with [Forge ECI](#), [Accelerate Rural Indiana](#), and [Our Southern Indiana](#) leaders first to build those partnerships. Each has related goals (page 58).

Big Ideas #1-3 & All Goals. Partner across the Cincinnati OH-KY-IN CSA starting with ArtsWave. SEI READI is the only Indiana region that can directly benefit from Cincinnati as part of that region. Ohio ranks [#12 for arts vibrancy](#), and greater Cincinnati ranks #19 among large cities. It has artists, arts and culture organizations, creative businesses, events, funders, supporters, capacity programs, media, and audience. Each is an opportunity to leverage in implementation. [ArtsWave](#) is a proven funder, capacity builder, and amplifier. It is practiced in out-of-state collaboration (e.g., the [Northern Kentucky Creative Placemaking Grant](#) program with [meetNKY](#)). Beyond its work, ArtsWave can connect the region to other Ohio resources and partners.



1. ALL-IN MARKETING

ART CONNECTED TO NATURE

The Idea

What would it look like to go “all-in” – to **showcase incredible natural assets** like the Ohio River Way, Versailles State Park, and Monarch Preserve **alongside a treasure trove of cultural attractions and sites**? Imagine a collectively curated web platform weaving in stories, showcasing artisans, highlighting events and opportunities, and connecting residents and visitors to the people and places that define the region. Then think bigger. Imagine a **shared regional marketing strategy across multiple platforms that creates a clear “brand” or sense of united identity centered on art and nature.**

It would serve as both marketing tool and region-wide calendar reflecting the unique charm and opportunities only found in Southeast Indiana. This model could take shape through a collective, coordinated efforts between tourism, the creative sector, and funders.

The Opportunity

This idea takes Goal 2 (Connect Communities) and supersedes it. Southeast Indiana’s rivers, hills, and trails naturally pair with its rich cultural life, offering a powerful opportunity to connect outdoor recreation with arts and culture.

Millions of visitors already come to enjoy natural assets like the Ohio River Way, Brookville Lake, and Versailles State Park – yet few discover the region’s equally vibrant cultural attractions. By linking recreation, storytelling, and the arts, the region can transform casual visits into deeper, more meaningful experiences that strengthen community identity, support local businesses and artists, and elevate quality of life.

Aligning with regional goals, the “all-in” approach, one that unites natural and cultural assets under a shared narrative and digital platform, will not only attract visitors but also drive resident engagement through shared storytelling and a centralized events calendar, positioning Southeast Indiana as a model for how the arts and environment together define place and purpose.

By our count, the region has:



1,620 sq mi FOOTPRINT with
19 sq mi of LAKE SURFACE and
41% FOREST COVER

Just imagine the number of linear trail-river/creek-lakefront miles!

Digging Deeper The Ohio River

The region has done significant groundwork – recreation studies, designated riverways, scenic byways – that can be leveraged for this effort. For example:

[The Ohio River Way](#), a trail connecting communities across Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio, is an officially designated National Water Trail at the recommendation of the National Park Service.

This rare recognition marks the largest addition to the National Trails System in 2025 – out of 387 miles designated nationwide, the Ohio River Way accounted for 308 miles.

[Ohio River Scenic Byway](#) – Indiana’s first scenic byway, has almost 30 years of practice to build from as well.

The Ohio River Way was officially designated June 2025. The Ohio River Scenic Byway and its extension were designated in 1992 and 2025.

An Abundance to Build from for Big Idea #1

Southeast Indiana's existing focus on natural assets and recreation, combined with the arts and culture assets highlighted throughout this plan, and living history provide a tremendous base. Here are just a few of the abundance of opportunities the region can build from.

NATURE & RECREATION

Indiana's **largest wildlife refuge** – Big Oaks
2nd largest state park – Versailles
 And **largest canoe race** – Brookville Canoe fest

AND...

Ohio & Whitewater Rivers and tributaries
 Brookville Lake-Whitewater Memorial Parks
 Designated Scenic Byways & Historic Roads
 Pedestrian/Bike Trail Projects & Trails in Parks
 Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve
 Red Wolf Sanctuary
 Wolf Creek Habitat & Rescue
 Perfect Slopes
 The Sunflower Field (Fox Farms)
 Ohio River Recreation Studies and plans

See Natural Assets Table in the Appendix
 page 124 for a more detailed list.

ARTS & CULTURE ASSETS & EVENTS

Key **Community Festivals** such as:

- Swiss Wine
- Freudenfest
- Harvest Fest

Dozens of **Music & Arts Festivals** such as:

- Batesville Music & Arts
- Dillsboro Jazz
- Bluegrass
- Batesville Music & Arts
- Harvest Fest

Four Renovated **Historic Theaters**

Established **Arts Anchors & Networks** such as:

- Rivertown Quilters
- Southeast Indiana Woodturners
- SE Indiana Art Guild
- Dearborn Highland Arts Council

HISTORIC SITES & COMMUNITIES

Historic Communities in Franklin (Metamora & Oldenburg) and Switzerland (Vevay) Counties

Unique Attractions across the region such as:

- Thiebaud Farmstead (Switzerland)
- Metamora Castle
- Ohio County Courthouse
- Milan '54 Museum
- 1804 Templeton Cabin
- Hillforest Victorian House Museum

Historic Districts in every county – 13 in all

And **so much more...**



Detail from Lawrenceburg River Walk Plan

2. FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE REGION INDIANA'S MUSIC CORRIDOR

The Idea

Celebrating *southeastern Indiana's deep musical roots* – from Richmond, [birthplace of recorded jazz](#) to Madison's "[music city](#)" – this corridor would showcase both the region's incredible musical legacy and today's vibrant culture connecting historic studios, performance venues, and living traditions. The bookends are strong but make no sense without the region in-between which makes up almost the entire corridor.

Music is woven into Southeast Indiana's DNA, deeply rooted in heritage – from early settlers (German, Swiss) to KY and African American slave influence. The region embraces a broad category of genres, and countless musicians hail from and live in the region. Musicians celebrate, support, share, and mentor one another, and there's seemingly no shortage of venues for folks to play – from backyards and bars to senior centers and event centers.

Link the bookends with this deep heritage? Now you have a big idea. Practically, implementation of this idea could be a framework for:

- Linking existing festivals and tours, while opening the doors for new ones as well;
- An aggressive marketing campaign spanning across regions; and
- A dedicated [tourism platform](#) / comprehensive website to host that campaign.

The Opportunity

While it would require communities in four regional economic development organizations to collaborate. With SEI READI in the lead the case is strong, and the rewards could reverberate throughout.

Digging into the inventories reveals a healthy cluster of assets and activity in between (e.g., Southeast Indiana Music Association and Hall of Fame, Rees Harps, revitalized theaters throughout, university music departments and programs, waterfront and park amphitheaters, regular live music in bars, churches, legion halls, casinos, basements, backyards, campgrounds). And all connected by rivers and scenic byways.



Southeast Indiana Musicians Association Generations of Tradition

SEIMA was founded in 2001 by two musician co-workers at Ross & Squibb Distillery who recognized there were so many amazing musicians, they wanted to honor and recognize them. Since then, **SEIMA has inducted almost 200 musicians into its hall of fame.** Its youth project has attracted 65 nominees since 2022, awarding over \$13,000 across 22 winners.

It has a vibrant and active membership across five counties that is rooted in heritage and families of musicians. Andy Jackson (son of founder Don Jackson) still plays at area nursing homes every Monday. His father played at senior centers and hosted jams.



Detail, SEIMA Mural, Lawrenceburg

SEIMA Project's Impact on Youth

*"I can't say how neat it is, that we have a local project/experience that **gives up and coming musicians a way to show their skills before heading off to college, trade school, apprenticeships or a career in music.** The process is simple to use and rewarding."*

My students have used the SEIMA Project and the financial gift given to them in their degrees, to present themselves confidently and professionally. I know through my teaching experience, that the more quality you present, the better impression you will make."

CRYSTAL POWERS, Director
Southeast Indiana Youth Orchestra
seiyouthorchestra.org

*"The SEIMA Project is a **wonderful opportunity for young musicians from Southeast Indiana to showcase their talents and receive financial support.** I know that my students have grown during this experience and enjoyed the performance opportunities as well as the positive feedback."*

I believe the SEIMA Project has given my students confidence in their abilities and helped them reach their goals whether it is to continue as a music major in college or a professional songwriter. These opportunities are unique and we are so blessed to have musicians in our area who are helping to support our local young musicians."

DONNA TANNER, Music Department Head,
Choral Director, and Assistant Drama Director,
East Central High School

An Abundance to Build from for Big Idea #2

Southeast Indiana's Vibrant Music Culture is hard to quantify. Musicians are wily that way but just start asking around. It is massive.

Venues & Production

A vibrant scene supported by bar, brewery, winery, church, high school, town park, event center, and farm venues – every county (20 listed, certainly more), including:

- Historic local gems like the Damm, Gibson, Liberty, & Historic Hoosier Theaters
- Unique locations like The Speakeasy Listening Room
- Outdoor venues like Lawrenceburg's Civic Park
- Small town venues like Metamora Opry and Columbia Street Music District
- Larger venues like Rising Star, Belterra, & Hollywood Casinos
- Local audio production like A. Kaiser Productions, Clear Sound Design, A&M Sound

Music Festivals & Events

Well over 80 music festivals and festivals with music, including:

- Birding Man Music Festival
- Dillsboro Jazz Festival, Summer Concert Series and The Porch
- Lawrenceburg Fall Music Fest and Summer Music on the River
- Happy Valley Bluegrass Festival
- Batesville Music & Arts Festival
- Music on the Square (Versailles)
- Metamora Mandolin Gathering and Grist Mill Jams, Acoustic Final Fridays, Second Saturdays, etc.

Musicians & Groups

- Numerous bands and performers (see SEIMA membership)
- Voices of Indiana and Southeast Indiana Youth Orchestra

Record Stores, Specialty Retail & Instrument Makers

- River Dog Music Collective, The fAxetory Music Co., Batesville Music Co.
- Rees Harps, Cincinnati Accordion, Jamonn Zeller String Instrument Repair & Restoration

And all things related to the Southeast Indiana Musicians Association

Music Goals in Other Regional Arts Plans

The bookends are in place with strategies in their new arts and culture plans for what comes next.

- [Our Southern Indiana](#) includes strategies for strengthening the Madison end.
- [Forge ECI](#) includes a music strategy big idea and call for investment in Richmond.

SEI READI's overlapping region, [Accelerate Rural Indiana](#), also has a plan with strategies for a

"regional performance and venue network that strengthens capacity of local cultural programming and attracts outside arts and cultural performances"

Southeastern Indiana could help ARI to jumpstart this effort by leveraging SEI READI's existing assets. Renovated historic theaters, almost 25 years of SEIMA Hall of Fame inductees, a vibrant calendar of music series and festivals are just the start.

Should Big Idea #2 be pursued, SEI READI would need to work with regional stakeholders to identify the vision, gameplan, and assets to serve as key stops along the music corridor.

Engaging key leaders in Madison and Richmond could bring early energy to the work.

3. DEEP TRADITIONS & PRACTICE

THE REGION AS FOLK SCHOOL

The Idea

Rooted in its legacy of music, craft, and making, Southeast Indiana has the ingredients to become a nationally recognized center for folks arts learning. ***By establishing a folk school or a network of creative learning centers, the region can foster creative careers and lifelong learners while strengthening local businesses.***

This initiative could have a dual purpose: 1) amplify the region's distinctive traditional arts identity through storytelling and celebration, and 2) attract and retain population by cultivating next-generation attachment and increasing quality of life and place. Practically, implementation could be a framework for the following (all of which are ideas that emerged in community visioning sessions):

- Cultural Art Centers, Makerspaces, and Hubs from Goal 1;
- Rebuilding [past studio tour from Ohio and Switzerland Counties](#) (Goals 2 & 4);
- Linking Plein Art Paint Outs as a progressive festival (Goals 1-4); and
- Elevating efforts of SEIMA, SEI MakerPlus, Still Pointe, Iron Timbers, and more – even creating new “institutes by the lake” (Goals 1-4).

The Opportunity

Built on the Region's Traditional Arts

“Indiana’s Folk School Region” builds upon a strong foundation in music, fiber and wood arts, fabrication, instrument building, and wine and whiskey-making. Grassroots education is already happening while Indiana and much of the Midwest is a **“folk school desert,”** offering this unique opportunity. Anchored near Greater Cincinnati yet grounded in authenticity and a focus on healing and discovery, a school or network of schools/learning hubs could position the region as a national model for education, cultural tourism, and rural vitality.



Learn More About Folk Schools

Models: <https://www.elyfolkschool.org> and <https://www.folkschool.org>. And Other Resources: <https://folkcraftrevival.com/suggested-resources/folkschools/> • <https://craftsmanship.net/resource-guide-us-folk-schools/> • <https://craftcouncil.org/national-craft-directory/> • <https://www.folkschoolalliance.org>

An Abundance to Build from for Big Idea #3

Southeast Indiana's rich craft and maker tradition, combined with established networks, emerging makerspaces, educational programs (e.g., welding, woodworking in career centers), enclaves (e.g., visual artists in and around Vevay), and the musical assets already discussed set the stage for vibrant "folk school" offerings.

Here are just a few of the abundance of opportunities the region can build from.

TRADITIONAL CRAFT

- [SEI MakerPlus](#) (emerging makerspace in Friendship)
- [Southeast Indiana Woodturners](#) (established network)
- Quilters, [Quilt Guilds](#), and Quilt Shops with classes such as [Pohler Fabrics](#)
- [Rees Harps](#), maker of [Harpsicle Harps](#) - 2024 Coolest Thing Made in Indiana
- [Whitewater Valley Blacksmiths](#), and local blacksmiths such as [Thornfire Forge](#)
- Fabricators throughout such as
 - o Iron Timbers, Osgood (*right*)
 - o [Red Forge](#), Batesville
 - o [Weberding's Carving Shop](#), Oldenburg
- Welding Programs at community colleges and career centers
- Numerous pottery studios throughout

VISUAL ARTS

- [Switzerland Co. Community Art Center](#) and Tony's [Garden](#) in Vevay
- [Stille Pointe Art Studio & Gallery](#), Rising Sun
- [Genesis Pathways to Success](#), Batesville
- Plein Air events across counties

LITERARY & FILM

- [Dillsboro Artist Lounge](#), groups, and more
- [Lawrenceburg's Writers Fair](#) (>40 writers!)
- [Ripley County Film Festival](#) (emerging)

MORE...

- Everything listed for Indiana's Music Corridor

Located in Southeastern Indiana—what some consider the Hardwood Capital of the world—Iron Timbers combines their passion and experience to create long-lasting and functional custom woodwork and metalwork.

A locally trained [family](#) of artisans
 Creators of the [Osgood Sculpture](#)
 Community [partner](#)
 Online [business training](#)
 In-person classes and camps
 Partner with [Genesis Pathways to Success](#)



Iron Timbers, Osgood

Call to Action

What's Next?

Now that the plan has been adopted and rolled out, it is time for the region, all six counties, the communities within them, and every corner of the creative sector to find its place in the goals and strategies – to convert the plan into specific actions it will take. Here are some thoughts to get started.

Goal & Strategy	2026-28: NEAR TERM	2028-30: MID-TERM	2030-35: LONG-TERM
1. ACTIVATE THE REGION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement and reuse projects (<i>signage, façade programs, landscaping and historic buildings, open spaces</i>) Activate with public art and programs 	Leadership from Local Economic Development, Main Street and/or Community Foundations Begin Small Identify Projects & Strategy	Learn Repeat Better	Repeat Bigger Sustain
2. CONNECT COMMUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate and activate nature in combination with cultural assets (<i>thematic trails, creative programming, signage</i>) Build regional tourism through relationships, collective strategies, and efforts 			
3. CULTIVATE NEXT GENERATION ROOTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower youth engagement and volunteerism Expand arts opportunities for all ages – co-design with target audiences Build creative career pathways (<i>internships, programs</i>) 	Leadership emerges from Goals 5 & 6 <i>(key partners will be schools, youth-serving organizations, arts anchors)</i> Advocate & Connect Train & Co-Design Identify Projects & Strategy Pilot Programs	Learn Repeat Better	Grow & Sustain
4. GENERATE CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower creative capacity (<i>connect to resources, training, micro-grants</i>) Expand access to space for creatives (<i>affordable spaces, retail opportunities</i>) Grow teaching and learning (<i>support paid gigs, knowledge and roster sharing programs</i>) 			
5. MOBILIZE, COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilize county-level and regional networks – creative and cross-sector Expand implementation capacity (<i>volunteer recruitment, training</i>) Catalyze a regionwide movement (<i>cross sector, annual convening</i>) 	SEI READI takes the lead <i>(Local Economic Development Organizations and Community Foundations partner)</i> Convene Groups Identify Opportunities Build Momentum	Learn Repeat Better	Grow & Sustain
6. FORMALIZE SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build support Build policy infrastructure (<i>% for art, streamline policies, etc.</i>) Secure sustainable funding 			

The Toolkit

We encourage readers to follow the guidance found in The Toolkit as they move forward with this plan (*beginning on page 103*). These resources align directly with goals and are designed to deepen understanding, build confidence, and equip leaders with the tools they need to translate ideas into action. Not every idea will fit every community, but all can inform new approaches.

What You Can Do Now

SEI READI will take the lead with Goals 5 and 6, providing a structure for other conversations, and IEDC will roll out Arts Initiative funding opportunities. But both of these are only first steps in a long race toward success. Arts and culture planning and implementation is a team sport, and this plan is intended to work at the region, county, community, and even the organizational and individual levels.

So, a few suggestions for getting started.

Region-Level SEI READI	<p>Roll Out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host discussions and presentations of the plan for key stakeholders in each of the counties to build buy-in and early action steps <p>Begin Implementation & Support Early Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate first meetings for all under Goals 5 and 6 to start new networks • Host webinars in support of the LEI Arts & Culture Initiative when re-launched, and offer proposal review consultations
Organizations & Councils at Any Level	<p>Take it In</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the plan and discuss it as a group • Dive into the information for your county, and add to it • Dive into the other counties, to find new opportunities • Look for connections to your mission and existing plans <p>Act On It</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly endorse the plan • Use the resources in the plan to learn more and guide your organization in setting goals that align with the plan

Digging Deeper into The Role of Community Foundations in this Plan

Community Foundations already play important roles, which will only grow with this plan. However, many have already begun the work. For example, the Ripley County Community Foundation plan includes:

"Convene and guide community groups to encourage and support cross county communication and identified challenges and/or opportunities"

Its strategies mirror ones in this plan:

- Help nonprofit organizations to increase capacity
- Seek funding to support county-wide initiatives.
- Expand community alliances
- Partner to catalyze investment with concentrations in arts & culture, environment & natural resources, education & workforce development, and health & well-being

We couldn't ask for better alignment and expect the same across the region.

Your Input View from the Survey

“ I think this has been an incredibly thought-provoking process. My sincere hope is that our local government officials will make a commitment to a bold, new approach to community development through arts and culture. The involvement of elected officials and community leaders in this process has been very encouraging.

Individual response from the regional survey used to provide feedback on the plan's vision, goals, and strategies.

More of What You Can Do Now...

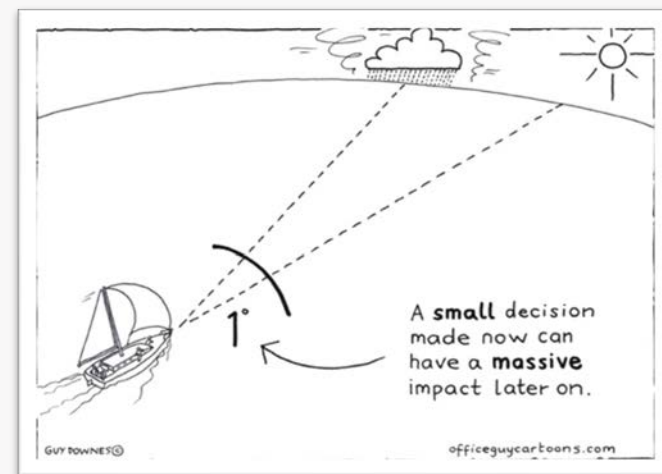
County-Level	<p>Community Foundations & Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start a Coffee & Calendars-like group in your county Call your peers across the region, convene, and start discussing the plan <p>Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite the creative sector to join you in touring empty and underused buildings / sites to inventory them throughout the county (downtowns and elsewhere) and share ideas for their use
Community-Level	<p>Main Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take the Downtown Revitalization Readiness Assessment Convene key stakeholders to discuss the plan and the assessment Host walking tours for key stakeholders to better know your assets and identify opportunities <p>Civic Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join in when the community foundation, economic development, tourism, Main Street, or arts and culture anchor calls <p>Local Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go back and review the ideas on page 51. Learn about and explore public policy and funding available to you Meet with the creative sector to understand its strengths and challenges
The Creative Sector	<p>Arts Nonprofits & Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call your peers across the region, convene, and start discussing the plan Join the local Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, and related Get to know the leaders for all of the above, then get a seat their table Join in the conversations and tours OR take the lead in getting them started (don't wait for others) <p>Artists & Creative Businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check out offerings from IAC, IEDC, and your local SBA <p>Public Libraries, Historic Societies & Museums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call your peers across the region, convene, and start discussing the plan
Any Individual	<p>Get Inspired, Learn Something New, & Share the Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read something from The Toolkit, then keep exploring Call a friend and talk about the plan Do something on this list of things that don't require anyone's permission

Before We Go...

What's your one small thing?



Just as one small decision now can have a massive impact over time, so one small action can sustain momentum.



The Recommendation

We encourage every reader to consciously identify one small thing to do today, tomorrow, the next day when they put this document down.

- Who should you meet and talk with?
- What can you learn more about?
- What can you talk with your board about?
- What action can you take that aligns with something in the plan?

Once that is done...

What's your next small thing?

Contact

Mary McCarty, mary.mccarty@sirpc.org



Recommended Tool for Implementation

Every Small Town Can Try Coffee & Calendars

It's the antidote to "I wish I'd known about that!" Ever found out about an event or project in your town only *after* it was happening? Ever wish you could have helped with something or offered some insight, *if you only knew it was coming*? You want to collaborate more with local and regional organizations, but you can't possibly know everything that's going on. ***Even in a small town, we don't keep each other informed like you'd think.***

Here's the simple solution: Why not just get folks together and compare organization calendars once a month or so? ***Keep it simple:***

- Invite some local people to coffee.
- Ask them to bring their groups' calendars.
- Go somewhere together and get some coffee.
- Let each person go over their group's calendar and tell what they have going on.
- That's all. Just share coffee and calendars.

Who to invite: Start with people who are part of any organizations related to your ideas. Think of arts or history groups, town or county government, the chamber of commerce or schools. ***You can start with a few and grow over time.*** Reach out to all kinds of community groups, local boards, churches, organizations, clubs, and everyone. Have them bring their calendars, too. Yes, declare it as an official public meeting of government groups if the law requires. Whatever you need to do to stay legal, but keep the coffee discussion itself informal.

What to talk about: ***The only goals (at first) are to share what you have planned and get to know each other better. Coffee and calendars.*** Later, people will naturally start talking about maybe cooperating, or doing shared projects, or noticing when they have shared goals. Then even later, maybe people can talk about collaborating in bigger ways. It will all start with just a few folks sitting down for "Coffee and Calendars."

Avoid this common trap: Don't try to replace the in-person get together with a combined online calendar. ***The calendar is not the goal. The conversation is the goal.***

Homework: ***Invite one person who is working on good things in your town to join you for Coffee and Calendars.*** Forward this story to them and suggest a specific day next week to get together.

Digging Deeper where This is already happening

IN SOUTHEAST INDIANA

Community Council Brookville (Franklin)

The Franklin Community Foundation schedules these, sends out invitations, and distributes notes to the list.

IN A NEIGHBORING REGION

Coffee with Bill Muncie (Delaware)

Bill Lett, developer and Em Street Brewing, owner hosts this WEEKLY power table in Muncie.

Coffee with the Mayor Connersville (Fayette)

Hosted by a civic group, this periodic sit down is for the community to chat with Mayor Frank.

Emerging Group Connersville (Fayette)

This is a small invitation-only group of leaders just getting started – a first step toward new relationships.

The Recommendation

Community Foundations in each county are uniquely positioned to launch efforts like this, jumpstarting Goals 5 & 6. We encourage them to dive in.



Article left by [Becky McCray](https://saveyourtown/every-small-town-can-try-coffee-and-calendars/) at <https://saveyourtown/every-small-town-can-try-coffee-and-calendars/>

The content is also found in ***From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-able Ideas, Projects, and Success Stories*** By Deb Brown and Mars Manderico (2024) [available for purchase](#)



Arts & Culture Plan

THE COUNTIES



Introduction

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. It assumes that each community, and the region overall, will periodically prioritize the most important of goals, strategies, and tactics for vision success – setting developmental benchmarks along the way.

This section “The Counties” includes six profiles – *one per county* – aren’t intended to be county-level plans. Instead, they **provide a starting point of information for each county to use in adapting this plan to their specific needs**. They include:

- **Arts & Culture Identity**, an overview of the county’s distinctive character and assets
- **From Community Visioning**, an excerpt from that county’s community vision session recap as a start in adapting the plan to local needs
- **Asset Highlights**, a summary view of inventoried cultural assets
- **County Composition** includes key population and economic numbers
- **Key Influences**, a brief presentation of catalytic funding, and momentum and challenges influencing efforts

There are too many stories to tell, works to highlight in each county to cover them all in such a small space. We encourage each to take this starting point and make it their own – telling the whole story in all its splendor.

Every community across the region comes to this plan from a different place – with different assets, resource levels, capacity, expertise, and authentic identity. To support that variety, this plan includes a toolkit of ideas and inspiration. Not every idea will fit every community, but all can inform new approaches.



And there is more on the [Project Website](#) that will gradually be available directly from [SEI READI](#), including:

- Community Visioning Presentation & Recap
- Interactive Asset Maps along with Asset Inventory and Project Participation Spreadsheets
- The Toolkit and More

Data Tables in the Appendix (pages 118-127) break out counties from the region for key indicators.



Ripley Plein Air Paint Out, Versailles State Park

Dearborn County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

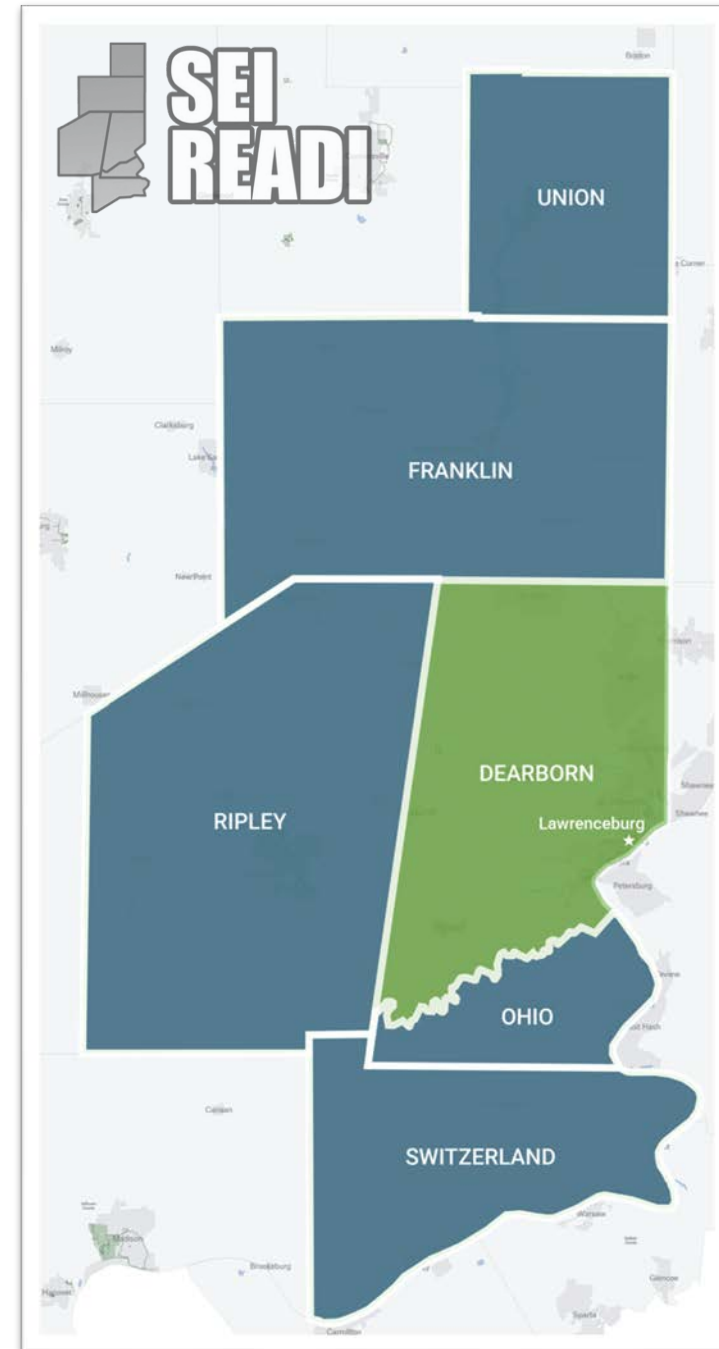
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

Arts & Culture Identity

Dearborn County, with a population just over 51,000, sits along the Ohio River as part of the Cincinnati metropolitan area. Its history is shaped by river and rail commerce, industries powered by German and Irish immigrant labor, and the enduring influence of Lawrenceburg – home to Ross & Squibb Distillery since 1847 and proudly known as **“Whiskey City USA.”** Music has been a long-standing tradition that continues to draw people to the area, while the Aurora Casket Company, founded in 1890 and now the largest privately owned casket manufacturer in the U.S., reflects the county’s industrial strength and endurance.

Today, Dearborn County combines its historic character with modern amenities and attractions. The Hollywood Casino & Hotel draws visitors to Lawrenceburg, while outdoor assets such as Perfect North Slopes, trails, and riverfront parks connect residents and visitors to recreation and nature. This foundation is matched by a vibrant cultural life, with active arts organizations, festivals, historic sites, and creative industry that together shape the county’s dynamic arts and culture profile.

Dearborn County’s vibrant arts and culture scene grows directly from its history and long-standing traditions, which continue to shape today’s creative life. **Music and fiber arts stand out as enduring traditions, supported by local businesses, organizations, and events.** The Southeastern Indiana Musicians Association, Southeast Indiana Youth Orchestra, drum corps, Liberty Theatre, Lawrenceburg Event Center, Dillsboro Jazz Festival, recording studios, and performances on stages across the county all contribute to a thriving music scene. Alongside



music, the county hosts a remarkable community of literary and visual artists – from authors and photographers to quilters and designers – creating a diverse and connected creative ecosystem that both honors tradition and embraces new expression.

What You Want for the Future *c. 2035*

Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Dearborn's needs.

1. **River and Region: A Gateway to Nature and Cincinnati**

The Ohio River Way, Perfect North Slopes, and the river valley offer endless recreation, eco-tourism, and scenic gathering potential. Positioned within the Cincinnati OH-KY-IN CSA major media market, the county can use its regional connections to amplify its voice, draw visitors, and balance rural charm with city convenience.

2. **Arts-Driven Countywide Transformation using Culture as Catalyst**

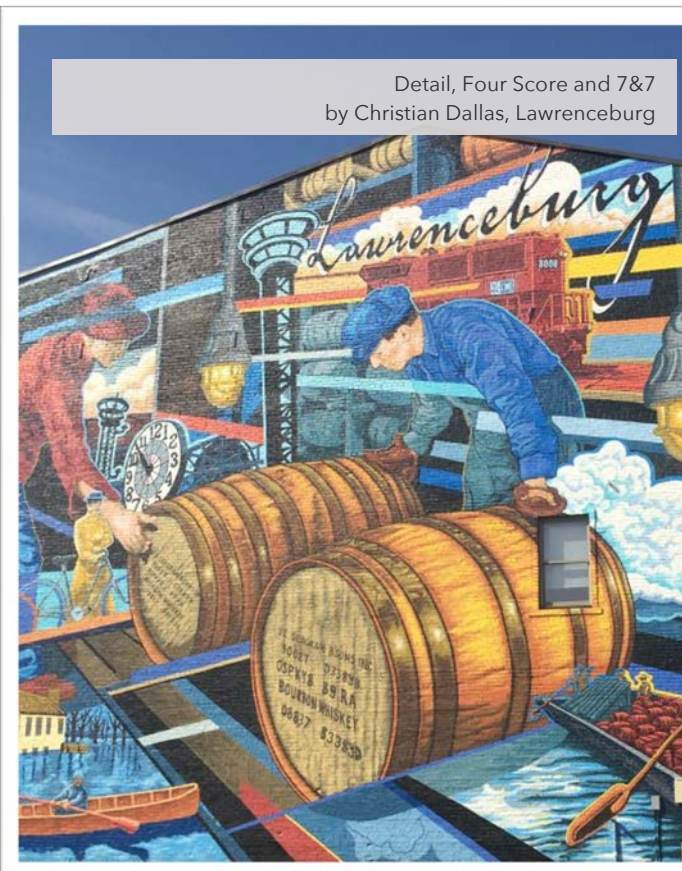
Arts and culture rise as a unifying force for economic development, youth engagement, and healing. Dearborn sees the creation of Cultural Arts Centers, and street fairs and festivals that span the region. The arts are no longer niche but mainstream, and a dedicated umbrella organization connects creatives, nonprofits, and civic leaders, ensuring coordination, shared space, and celebration of local identity.

3. **Reuse, Revive, Reconnect: Historic and Built Assets as Community Engines**

Older buildings, from downtown storefronts to legacy institutions, are restored and repurposed to serve new needs – artist studios, community theaters, and maker hubs. Architecture becomes a storybook and an incubator. Reinvestment supports walkability, intergenerational gathering, and place-based pride.

4. **Youth, Wellness, and Belonging**

A bold focus on young people and well-being shapes the county's future. New creative programming invites ages 20-30 to stay, grow, and give back. The healing nature of the arts supports one of the state's strongest recovery networks. Schools and American Legions connect with arts professionals, and small-town parks become hubs of intergenerational activity.



Rivertown Players, Lawrenceburg

5. Vibrant Downtown and Coordinated Leadership

Downtown is transformed with storefront activation, alley enhancements, heritage-inspired design, and consistent activity. Micro-events, DORA (designated outdoor refreshment areas), and effective communication tools drive engagement, while professional leadership and Main Street accreditation provide a foundation for sustained growth.

What You Have

Dearborn County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.



Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
125	Arts	
61	Artists & Creative Business	Artists & Creative Businesses – Liberty Theatre, The Crafter's Cove, Maple Hill Pottery, Busy Needle Quilting, Three Ridges Design Co, Distinctive Knits, 17 literary artists, 11 photography studios, 6 music focused businesses, designers, traditional artists, musicians, and visual artists
7	Informal Group	
15	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
31	Public Art	
11	Organizations	
70	Culture	
32	History & Heritage	Arts Organizations & Groups – Southeastern Indiana Musicians Association, Youth Orchestra, and Art Guild; Dearborn Highlands Arts Council, Dillsboro Arts Friendship Gallery, Rivertown Players, Voices of Indiana, Rivertown and Lawrenceburg Modern Quilters Guilds
21	Events & Traditions	
13	Parks & Trails	
4	Funders & Friends	
44	Misc.	
32	Civic Assets	Public Libraries in Aurora, Dillsboro, Lawrenceburg, and West Harrison Historical Groups dedicated to Dearborn, Dillsboro, River City Classic Cars; Hillforest Victorian House Museum, Weber Sports Bicycle Shop and Museum, and Aurora High School Museums Places – Guilford Covered Bridge, historic districts (Aurora, Lawrenceburg, Greendale), and 21 National Register Historic sites Festivals – Dillsboro Jazz Festival, Aurora Farmer's Fair, Lawrenceburg Fall Museum Fest, St Leon Historic Pole Raising, Whiskey City Summer Fest Nature & Trails – Oxbow Nature Conservancy, Perfect North Slopes, Rullman and Gladys Russell Wildlife Refuges, Dearborn Trail, Ohio River Way National Water Trail Other Places & Spaces – Hollywood Casino & Hotel, Lawrenceburg Speedway, Archaeological Research Institute
12	Other Opportunities	
In addition to the highlights presented here. The Full Inventory with individual asset details is available as well Inventory sheets for each county Interactive regional map		

County Composition

Overview		2020 #	Co. Rank
Population		50,679	#28
Square Miles		305	
Population / Sq Mi		168	
		% of Co.	
City	Lawrenceburg (seat)	5,129	10%
CDP	Bright	5,814	11%
CDP	Hidden Valley	5,529	11%
City	Greendale	4,602	9%
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)			
City	Aurora	3,479	7%
Town	Dillsboro	1,360	3%
Town	Moore's Hill	675	1%
Town	St Leon	660	1%
Town	West Harrison	325	1%
Everywhere Else		23,106	46%

Composition		2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool	0-4	5	#35
School Age	5-17	16	#31
College Age	18-24	8	#31
Young Adult	24-44	23	#29
Older Adult	45-64	28	#28
Seniors	65+	20	#28
Median Age		43	

Dynamics		2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)		+1.5 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income		\$82,578	#7
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income		\$60,731	#14
Poverty Rate		8 %	#86

Notable

- Population growth (+1.5%) below state average (+2%)
- Median Household Income ranks higher than the state average (69,458)
- 8% poverty rate ranks 86/92 – one of the lowest poverty rates in the state

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census) (fractions rounded to full digit)



Lawrenceburg's [Award-Winning](#) Civic Park in action

Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments	
\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$6-8,000,000	OCRA Stellar Pathway Designee <i>a multi-year, multi-million-dollar quality of place initiative</i>

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
\$ 600,000	Liberty Theater	---	none
<i>See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.</i>			

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural assets (Perfect Slopes, Ohio River) Ohio River Way National Water Trail 2025 designation by the U.S. Department of Interior Strong music sector (venues, businesses, performers) Makers are connected across the county by art form (e.g., SEIMA) Most active recovery service community in the state (CARE, JCAP) with opportunity to deepen connection between artists and recovery community Dillsboro Arts Creator Space implementation skills through Creative Convergence grant Ability to leverage abandoned buildings Willingness to keep the conversation going

Challenging Pulls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No concerted push for arts and culture (yet) Perceived imbalance within county (Lawrenceburg gets the most attention) Communication Challenges (West Dearborn disconnected from east, getting info to North Dearborn/getting word out) "Greater Cincinnati" (entire county in MSA) – all news comes out of Cincinnati Lawrenceburg a commuter area offers benefits but outside Indiana systems



Tuesdays at Arts

Dillsboro Arts in the Creator Space
Every Month - Community Sharing - Open to everyone!

1st Tuesdays: Music Circle
Bring a song. Bring an instrument. Share the music.

2nd Tuesdays: Writer's Group
Share your writing and ideas with other writers.

3rd Tuesdays: Life Drawing
Bring your favorite drawing materials, \$5 to donate towards the model fee and see what emerges!

4th Tuesdays: Artists Lounge
Join in with artists, musicians and writers to talk about your work, ask for advice, share your inspirations, . . . find a creative friend.

. . . and in those months with a **5th Tuesday**, come for a surprise happening!
All activities 6:00-8:00 pm

Friendship Gallery is always open during the Tuesday activities.

info@dillsboroarts.org
12926 Bank Street, Dillsboro, IN



Southeast Indiana Youth Orchestra, Aurora

Franklin County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

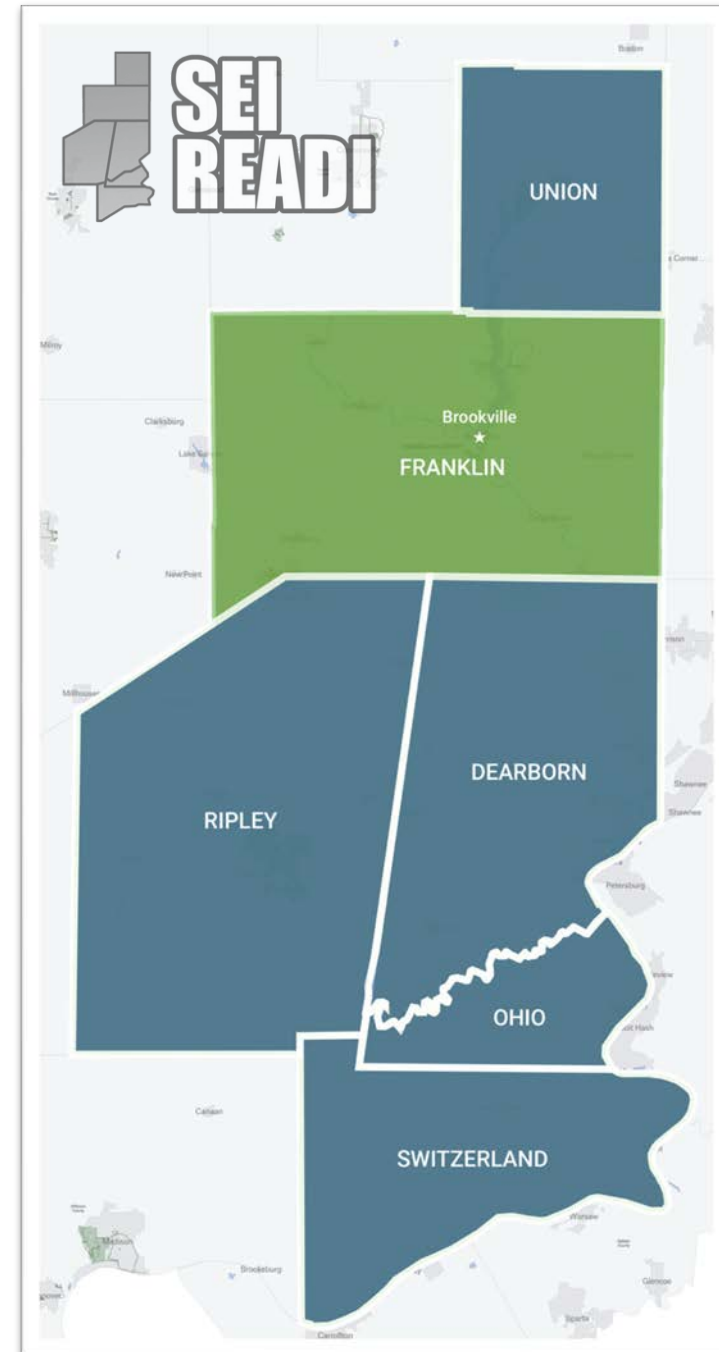
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

Arts & Culture Identity

Located **just 40 minutes from Cincinnati**, Franklin County is a rural and bucolic destination steeped in arts and culture heritage and traditions. With a population of just over 23,000, the county's history is visible in its Primitive Baptist and German settler roots, canal trade-era structures, and railroad driven industry that still define its character. **Communities like Metamora and Oldenburg serve as living time capsules:** Oldenburg's churches, historic architecture, and the Sisters of St. Francis convent reflect its German heritage, while Metamora brings the Whitewater Canal trade boom to life through the Whitewater Valley Railroad, the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site, and tradition-driven businesses, artisans, music, and historic structures. Brookville, the county seat, adds further distinction as the home of some of Indiana's most important artists – T.C. Steele and J. Ottis Adams – and Indiana's 4th-6th Governors.

Complementing its heritage, the county's natural assets – Brookville Lake and the Whitewater River – draw over a million weekend and seasonal visitors each year. The county also takes pride in the quality of its schools and community-based programs, its strong 4-H tradition, and the enduring sense of community that connects its residents across generations.

Music and visual arts take root in Franklin County, mingling seamlessly with a rich and ever-visible history. **Signature festivals like Freudenfest and the Franklin County Quilt Show amplify community identity** and celebrate cultural heritage, drawing thousands each year. Performance venues, the Franklin County Arts Council, along with annual events like the Plein Air Paint Out



(echoing Hoosier Group traditions) and the Chainsaw Invitational, showcase today's talents while inspiring the next generation. While most public art was created in the last century, newer works like the **"Great Chicken Fry" rooster sculptures** in Brookville and the playful fire hydrant characters in Oldenburg reflect a commitment to vibrancy and place-making.

The county's inventory of 22 "Creative Industry / Artists" skews heavily toward the visual arts – especially photography – yet music is equally powerful here. Metamora alone, anchored by Metamora Performing Arts, is home to the Songfarmers of Metamora, Tuesday Night Jam, Metamora Mandolin Gathering, Metamora Music Festival, and more. Countywide, the Happy Valley Bluegrass Festival in Batesville, Music on Main in Brookville, and live performances in taverns and festivals across communities keep Franklin's musical traditions thriving.

Interwoven throughout is the county's deepest informant: history. Heritage is in Franklin's DNA and, in Metamora's case, remains a cornerstone of the economy. It fuels tourism, culture, and aesthetic character. Documented "History & Heritage" assets include three active organizations and 14 significant sites – 1 state historic site and 7 National Register of Historic Places listings.

What You Want for the Future *c. 2035*

Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Franklin's needs.

1. **Connected by Place, Arts & Heritage**

Franklin County's rich heritage, natural beauty, and creative assets come together through events, public art, and trails. Church tours, mural projects – from small-scale to visionary – and festivals like Freudenfest celebrate local character, connect communities, and strengthen a shared sense of place.

2. **Public Art & Beautification for Community Pride**

Murals, sculptures, and gardens transform public spaces into vibrant, welcoming places. These enhancements invite visitors and residents alike to explore and celebrate the county's unique identity.

3. **Summer Influx, but Year-Round Activation**

Solstice gatherings, county-wide plein air paint-outs, live theatre, and arts learning institutes create a lively calendar of events that engage locals and attract artists and visitors all year.



"Great Chicken Fry" rooster sculpture, Brookville



Freudenfest, Oldenburg

4. Communication & Collective County-wide Action

Franklin County moves forward together through shared calendars, strong local leadership, and cross-county collaboration. Digital tools, creative platforms, and community councils keep efforts aligned – building a unified identity that reflects every corner of the county.

5. Brookville Lake as Cultural Anchor & Connector to Community

With intentional planning – trails, public art, wayfinding, events, and marketing – Brookville Lake becomes a cultural gateway that connects people to towns, businesses, and local stories, turning recreation into lasting community engagement while deepening economic and cultural connections.

What You Have

Franklin County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
75	Arts	
22	Artists & Creative Business	Artists & Creative Businesses – Schwestern Gallery of Arts, She Shed Glass Studio, Columbia Street Music District, 8 photographers, painters, musicians, potters, traditional artists Arts Organizations & Groups – Franklin County Arts Council, Metamora Performing Arts – Opry Barn, Quilt Batts of Franklin County, Songfarmers of Metamora, Tuesday Night Jam, Whitewater Valley Blacksmiths Public Libraries in Brookville and Laurel Historical Groups dedicated to Franklin County Historic Society, Historic Metamora Places – Whitewater Canal State Historic Site, Historic Laurel Jail, and 11 National Register historic sites including Stockheugter Covered Bridge, Little Cedar Grove Baptist Church, and 4 historic districts Festivals – Freudenfest, Happy Valley Bluegrass Festival in Batesville, Cedar Grove Fireman's Festival, Franklin County Quilt Show, Metamora's Chainsaw Carving Invitational, Metamora Music Festival, and Laurel's Trikefest Nature & Trails – Mounds State Recreation Area, Whitewater River, Brookville Lake, Whitewater Canal Trail, Whitewater Canal Scenic Byway Other Places & Spaces – Haspin Acres, Sal Creek Horse Ranch, Wolf Creek Habitat and Rescue
4	Informal Group	
13	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
34	Public Art + Roosters	
2	Organizations	
50	Culture	
17	History & Heritage	
20	Events & Traditions	
12	Parks & Trails	
3	Funders & Friends	
29	Misc.	
14	Civic Assets	
15	Other Opportunities	
	In addition to the highlights presented here. The Full Inventory with individual asset details is available as well Inventory sheets for each county Interactive regional map	

County Composition

Overview			Composition			Dynamics		
	2020 #	Co. Rank		2024 %	Co. Rank		2023	Co. Rank
Population	22,785	#67	Preschool	0-4	5 #68	Population Growth (2020-2024)	+1.5 %	
Square Miles	384		School Age	5-17	17 #66	Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$77,456	#13
Population / Sq Mi	60		College Age	18-24	7 #67	Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$57,550	#25
% of Co.			Young Adult	24-44	23 #68	Poverty Rate	9 %	#78
No cities or towns larger			Older Adult	45-64	27 #64			
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)			Seniors	65+	21 #65			
Town Brookville (seat)	2,622	12%	Median Age	43				
City Batesville (partial, Ripley)	1,937	9%						
CDP Lake Santee	889	4%						
Town Oldenburg	647	3%						
CDP New Trenton	595	3%						
Town Laurel	406	2%						
CDP Metamora	207	1%						
Town Cedar Grove	150	1%						
Everywhere Else	15,332	67%						

Notable

- Aging population with nearly 50% age 45+
- Median Age (43) higher than the state average (38)
- 9% live in poverty
- Median Household Income ranks above state average (\$69,458)

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census) (fractions rounded to full digit)



Franklin County School art student artwork, Brookville

Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments	
\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$ 350,000	OCRA Community Development Block Grant <i>Town of Brookville: Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Grant</i>

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
---	none	\$2,000,000	Brookville Renovate to Eliminate (Blight)
<i>See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.</i>			

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already has a functioning county-wide Community Council (e.g., Coffee & Calendars) • Improvements made to the Metamora Opry Barn • Millions of tourists coming into the county every summer • Community-based action planning experience with the ICI team from Ball State • Brookville's public art project implementation skills developed through Creative Convergence grant 	
Challenging Pulls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed-upon need to strengthen communication, collaboration, and marketing – and leveraging technology to do so • Challenges identifying strategies for waterfront development and drawing lake visitors into town • Capacity building needed, particularly around where to start and accessing resources • Metamora's need for significant investment 	



Chicken Festival & Fry Off, Brookville

Accelerate Rural Indiana READI Projects

Arts and culture related projects that Batesville's regional development organization supports also exert positive momentum for Franklin and Ripley Counties.

	READI Investment
Kids Discovery Factory	1,000,000
Skate Park	50,000
Ivy Tech Welding Program	400,000
Arts & Innovation Hub	2,000,000
Trails & Gathering Space @ Margaret Mary Health	2,000,000
Rural Schools Reimagined	3,200,000



Metamora Opry Barn & Performing Art

Ohio County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

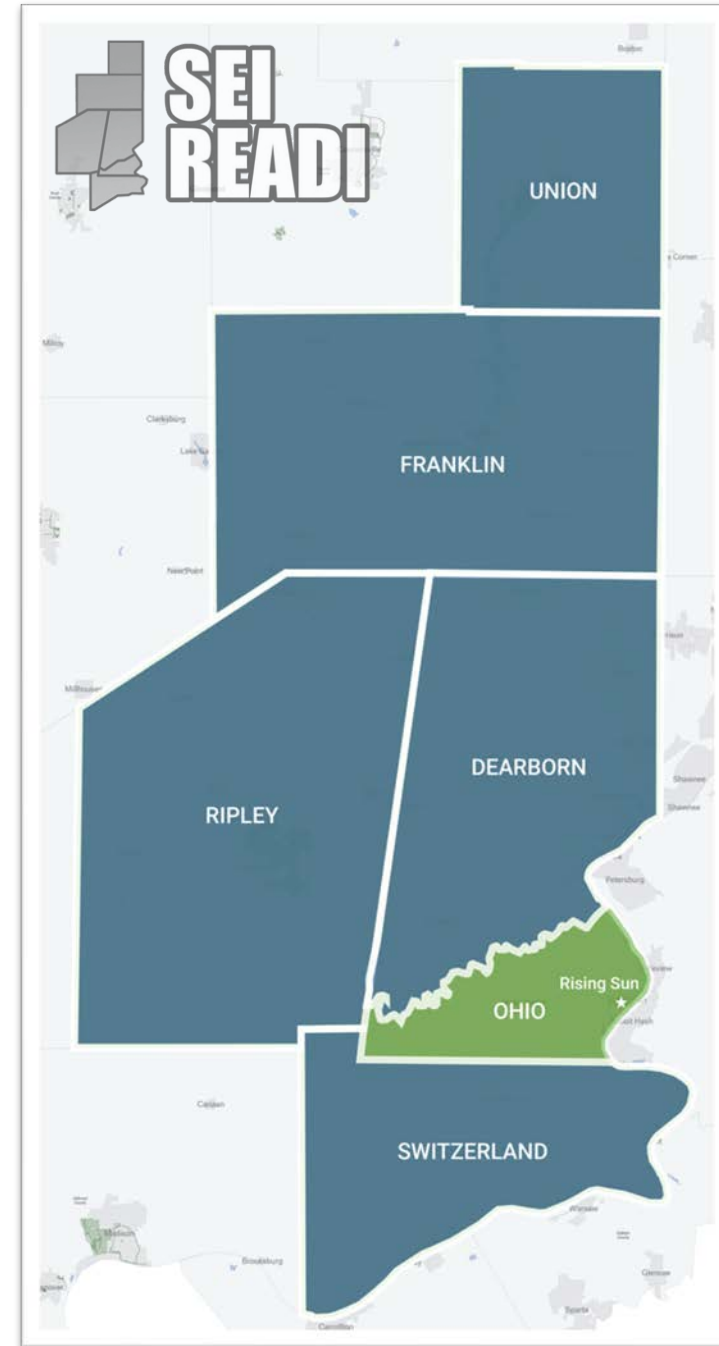
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

Arts & Culture Identity

Situated along the Ohio River shared by neighboring Kentucky, Ohio County owns the unique title as Indiana's smallest county by both population and land area, with just over 6,000 residents and 86 square miles. Its county seat, Rising Sun, once hailed in the early 1900s as one of the state's most prominent young cities, has since settled into its role as a bedroom community.

The county's roots run deep. German immigrants brought farming traditions, flatboat commerce spurred early prosperity, and the locally made Clore plows gained regional recognition. The Berkshire family played a role in abolitionist efforts, while Rising Sun's courthouse remains the oldest continuously operating in Indiana. By the late 19th century, as river traffic waned and rail connections never materialized, Rising Sun transitioned from a bustling commercial hub to a quieter river town. Its heritage remains visible in the architecture and landmarks that define its charming downtown. Complemented by natural assets – from rolling countryside to the sweeping Ohio River – Ohio County's historic and creative sectors provide a solid foundation for cultural and economic vitality.

For Indiana's smallest county, Ohio boasts an impressive array of arts and culture assets that reflect and celebrate both its past and present. Rees Harps, inventor of the popular *Harpicle Harps* and winner of the *Indiana Small Business Development Center's 2024 "Coolest Thing Made in Indiana"* award, continues the county's remarkable legacy of innovation. Rees follows in the footsteps of J.W. Whitlock, Rising Sun's first renowned harp inventor, whose automatic harp is preserved at the Ohio County Historical Museum.



The museum, along with the Southeast Indiana Veterans Museum, historic sites, and distinctive architecture showcased in downtown Rising Sun and across the county, underscores a deep commitment to heritage. Festivals such as the Navy Bean Festival, the Rising Sun Christmas Model Train Show, and the river-based Catfish Tournament foster community pride while drawing visitors to the region.

Although Ohio County does not currently have a formal arts organization, it **supports a strong and active creative industry, particularly in the visual arts**, with artists and businesses contributing to its cultural vitality. A growing collection of public art – indoors and out – along with civic leadership committed to quality of place ensures that the county's natural assets remain interwoven with its arts and culture initiatives.

What You Want for the Future c. 2035

Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Ohio's needs.

1. Riverfront as a Cultural and Recreational Anchor

The river is a defining focal point for storytelling, tourism, and activity. As a designated "National Water Trail" the Ohio River Way and riverfront support events, recreation, and heritage-based experiences that connect residents and visitors to place.

2. Heritage Preservation and Storytelling

Historic assets like the Underground Railroad sites, Carnegie Library, Rees Harps, and the courthouse are celebrated and activated. A renewed focus on walking tours, architecture, and ghost stories positions Ohio County as a place where the past informs the present and inspires pride.

3. Nature-Based Living and Community Wellness

Inspired by models like Paducah, KY and Strasburg, PA, the county evolves into a hub for visual and performing arts, film, and local fabrication, with expanded markets and incentives supporting creators and small businesses.

4. Creative Placemaking and Public Art

Strategic marketing, compelling storytelling, and curated tourism packages (e.g., Blue Ridge-style rail tourism) highlight local assets, build regional pride, and attract visitors from beyond the county.



Navy Bean Festival, Rising Sun

Your Input View from the Survey

“ Small town, Big Catch!
Thank you for including Indiana's smallest county, Ohio County!

I would love to see us better connected to Aurora and Lawrenceburg through the bike trail that stops at Lesko Park... [It] would be amazing if we could get that to happen.

I want all the art everywhere and all the outdoor activities. With our gorgeous riverfront, it makes total sense.

Individual response from the regional survey used to provide feedback on the plan's vision, goals, and strategies.

5. Vibrant Downtown and Coordinated Leadership

Downtown is transformed with storefront activation, alley enhancements, heritage-inspired design, and consistent activity. Micro-events, DORA (designated outdoor refreshment areas), and effective communication tools drive engagement, while professional leadership and Main Street accreditation provide a foundation for sustained growth.

What You Have

Ohio County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
50	Arts	
19	Artists & Creative Business	
–	Informal Group	
6	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
25	Public Art	
–	Organizations	
24	Culture	
6	History & Heritage	
11	Events & Traditions	
5	Parks & Trails	
2	Funders & Friends	
13	Misc.	
9	Civic Assets	
4	Other Opportunities	
<p>In addition to the highlights presented here. The Full Inventory with individual asset details is available as well</p> <p>Inventory sheets for each county</p> <p>Interactive regional map</p>		<p>Artists & Creative Businesses – Still Pointe Art Studio and Gallery, Rees Harps, Rising Sun Metal Works, Geneva’s Homemade Quilts, Heather’s Art, 4 photographers, 3 traditional artists</p> <p>Arts Organizations & Groups – Ohio County Public Library, Heritage Farms at Willow Creek, Grand Theater at the Casino, King’s Landing</p> <p>Public Library in Rising Sun</p> <p>Historical Groups – Ohio County Historical Museum, Southeast Indiana Veterans Museum, Ohio County Courthouse, Heritage Hall – former 1832 First Presbyterian Church, Triple Whipple Bridge</p> <p>Places – Rising Sun Historic District, City Pavilion, Heritage Hall</p> <p>Festivals – Navy Bean Festival, Ohio Valley River Cats Catfish Tournament, Rising Sun Christmas Model Train Show, Ohio County State Fair</p> <p>Nature & Trails – Ohio River, Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve, Denver-Siekman Environmental Park</p> <p>Other Places & Spaces – Red Wolf Sanctuary, Rising Star Casino, City Pavillion</p>



County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	5,940	#92
Square Miles	70	
Population / Sq Mi	86	
% of Co.		
No cities or towns larger		
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
City Rising Sun (seat)	2,248	38%
Everywhere Else	3,692	62%

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census)
(fractions rounded to full digit)

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	4	#92
School Age 5-17	16	#92
College Age 18-24	6	#92
Young Adult 24-44	21	#92
Older Adult 45-64	28	#92
Seniors 65+	25	#92
Median Age	48	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	+0.9 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$70,757	#33
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$55,398	#41
Poverty Rate	9 %	#74

Notable.

- Aging population with over 50% ages 45+
- Median age (48) is higher than the state average (38)
- 9% live in poverty
- 62% of Ohio County's population lives outside of Rising Sun



Rising Sun Main Street and National Historic District

Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments

\$10,000,000 READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI
Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals

	1.0		2.0
\$ 50,000	Ohio County Pop-Up Pavillion	--	none

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes

- Golf cart ordinance in place and DORA policy initiative in process
- 2025 Strategic Investment Plan adopted (wayfinding implementation in process)
- Ohio River Way National Water Trail 2025 designation by the U.S. Department of Interior
- Accredited Main Street (though needs stabilization)
- New signage coming to town

Challenging Pulls

- Lack of capacity to meet demand (e.g., what people want Main Street to do vs. its capacity to do it) – need more leadership/volunteers in general
- Difficulties activating people to attend events and to volunteer
- Economic development embedded in city planning rather than dedicated professional
- Lack of trees/shade downtown hinders welcome and walkability
- Communication silos make government / community collaboration difficult
- Aging/Retirement population is a focus to lean in on but makes growth difficult



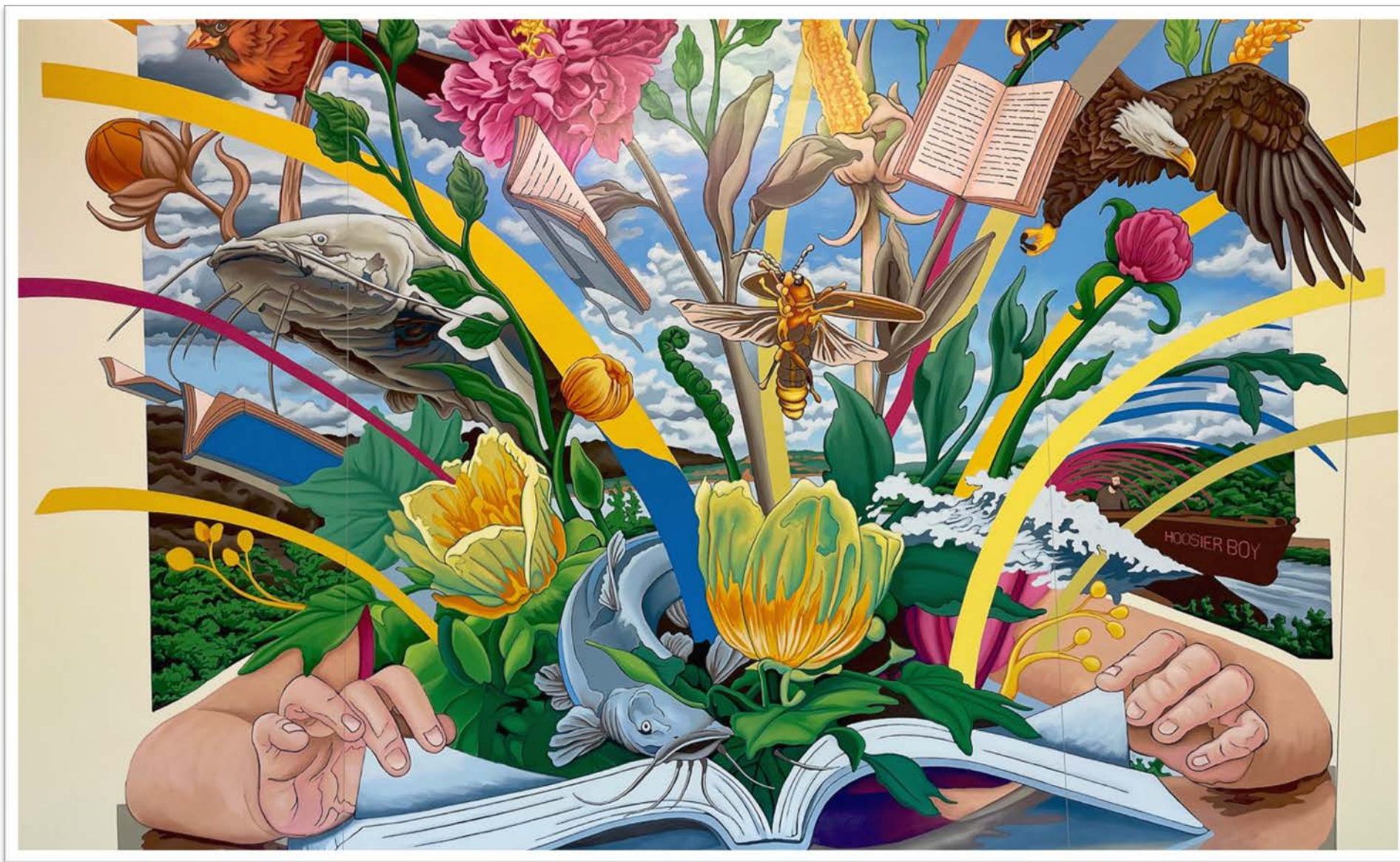
Harpicle Harps, Rising Sun
Voted 2024 Coolest thing Made in Indiana



Hibiscus Mural by JJ Wolfe, Rising Sun Waterfront



Ohio County Courthouse, oldest in continuous use in state



Detail of Mural by Christian Dallas, Rising Sun Public Library

Ripley County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

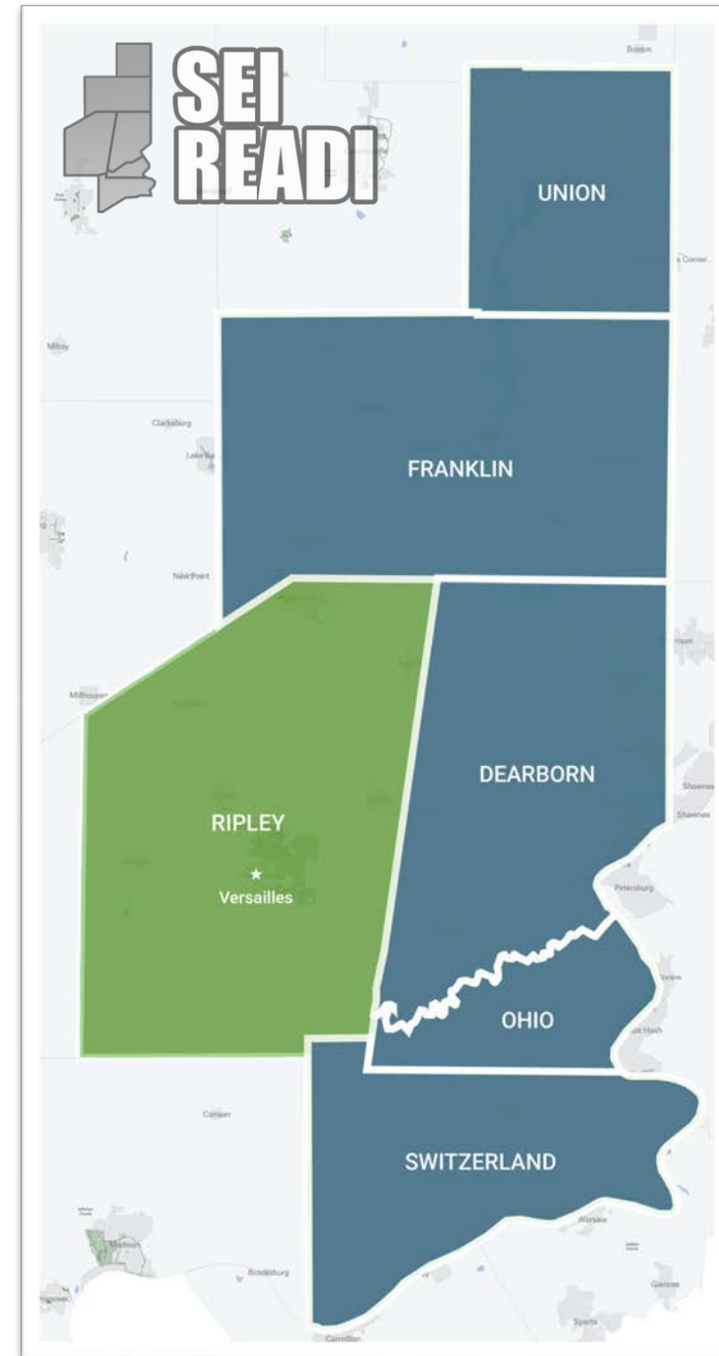
Arts & Culture Identity

Ripley County, home to nearly 29,000, is defined by community spirit, pride in heritage, and a neighborly culture rooted in families that have lived here for generations. People are known for their **“can-do” attitude, generosity, and willingness to support one another** – qualities that carry into the county’s vibrant arts and cultural life. Traditions of craftsmanship, passionate arts educators, rich music history, and distinctive festivals all highlight the creative energy of its residents. The landscape shapes daily life, with Versailles State Park, winding creeks, and natural beauty offering recreation, gathering spaces, and a connection to place.

The county is perhaps best known for **the “Milan Miracle” of 1954**, when Milan High School captured the state basketball championship and inspired the film *Hoosiers*. Ripley County also played a significant role in the Underground Railroad, reflecting its long tradition of generosity and courage. Batesville anchors the economy with major employers like Batesville Casket Company and Hillenbrand, whose manufacturing strength supports jobs and philanthropy. Today, museums, festivals, and community events preserve these legacies while sustaining a cultural identity defined by resilience, creativity, and connectedness.

Ripley County is home to a remarkable collection of arts and culture assets, anchored by a vibrant creative industry and enriched by strong traditions in music, literary, and visual arts.

Artisan excellence is reflected in nationally recognized makers such as Iron Timbers, featured on HGTV’s *Good Bones*, alongside Red Forge, Thornfire Forge, and Indiana Artisans Robin Dyer (Original Moccasins) and Roland Rein (the Basket Man). A thriving literary scene is evident in the work of 8 published writers, a local bookstore, and a publication company, while 5 arts



organizations – including the Batesville Area Arts Council, Southeast Indiana Woodturners, SEI MakerPlus, and two active theatres – further traditions, champion contemporary creativity, and provide valuable community programming. Music, deeply rooted in traditions and community legacies, remains a defining cultural thread evident through signature events like the Batesville Art & Music Festival, performers, and myriad hosting venues across the county including taverns, wineries, theatres, the Holdsworth Pavilion, and Speakeasy Listening Room.

Ripley County also honors and shares its history with pride. Fourteen sites on the National Historic Register, 6 museums, 9 historic bridges, active preservation groups, and 5 Underground Railroad driving trails all highlight heritage. Signature events such as the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association’s annual Championship bring history to life. Looking ahead, the new arts and innovation hub at Batesville Memorial Library promises to nurture emerging talent and inspire the next generation of makers, artists, and storytellers.

What You Want for the Future c. 2035

Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Ripley’s needs.

1. **An Arts-Rich Countywide Identity**

Ripley County becomes a regional arts destination anchored by dedicated arts spaces, a countywide arts council, and events that feature local talent. From woodworking and live music to mural festivals, creativity is visible, celebrated, and woven into every community.

2. **Trail-Connected Communities and a Reinvented Versailles State Park**

A network of bike and walking trails links towns, Versailles State Park, and community hubs. The park itself is reimagined with lodging, event space, and trail access, making it a year-round draw for all.

3. **A County of Story, Sound, and Celebration**

Home to a growing Music Hall of Fame and unique festivals, Ripley County honors its musical legacy and community spirit. Events, public art, and storytelling lift up shared heritage and small-town charm while inviting new voices.



Weberding's Carving Shop, Batesville



Glockenspiel Clock by Chaz Kaiser, Aesthetic Metal Studio



The Osgood Sculpture by Iron Timbers

4. Youth-Led, Future-Focused

Youth engagement is prioritized through school-based art recognition, expanded STEAM programming, and intergenerational creative initiatives. Young people shape Ripley County's future and are seen, heard, and celebrated.

5. Aesthetic and Cultural Integration in Community Development

Public art, wayfinding, and design are central to how Ripley County grows. From gateway signage and murals to cohesive branding and beautification, the look and feel reflect pride, purpose, and place.

What You Have

Ripley County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
108	Arts	
47	Artists & Creative Business	
1	Informal Group	
13	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
42	Public Art	
5	Organizations	
56	Culture	
22	History & Heritage	
17	Events & Traditions	
15	Parks & Trails	
2	Funders & Friends	
41	Misc.	
31	Civic Assets	
10	Other Opportunities	
	In addition to the highlights presented here. The Full Inventory with individual asset details is available as well	
	Inventory sheets for each county	
	Interactive regional map	
		Artists & Creative Businesses – Iron Timbers, Red Forge, Batesville Music Co, Weberding's Carving Shop, Sandy Pickett, 8 authors, music groups and musicians, Indiana Artisans: Robin Dyer's Moccasins, The Basket Man
		Arts Organizations & Groups – Southeast Indiana Woodturners, Batesville Area Arts Council, SEI MakerPlus, The Damm Theatre, Gibson Theatre, Southeast Indiana Creative Collective, Kids Discovery Factory
		Public Libraries in Versailles, Batesville, Osgood, and Milan
		Historical Groups – Ripley County Historical Society & Museum, Batesville Area Historic Center, Ripley County Basketball Hall of Fame, Milan '54 Museum, Osgood Historical Museum, Sunman Historical Museum
		Places – 14 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, 9 bridges
		Festivals – Plein Air Paint Out, Ripley County Film Fest and Park Hop, National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association National Championships and Spring Shoots, Bricktoberfest, Batesville Museum & Arts Festival, Milan's Christmas Walk
		Nature & Trails – Versailles State Park, Underground Railroad Driving Trails
		Other Places & Spaces – Holdsworth Entertainment Pavillion, Capability Farm, Bel-Air Drive-in Theatre



650 North

County Composition

Overview		2020 #	Co. Rank
Population		28,995	#55
Square Miles		447	
Population / Sq Mi		65	
		% of Co.	
City	Batesville (<i>partial, Franklin</i>)	5,265	18%
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)			
Town	Versailles (seat)	2,184	8%
Town	Milan	1,823	6%
Town	Osgood	1,587	5%
Town	Sunman	914	3%
Town	Holton	417	1%
Town	Napoleon	236	1%
Everywhere Else		16,569	57%

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census)
(fractions rounded to full digit)

Composition		2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool	0-4	6	#52
School Age	5-17	17	#52
College Age	18-24	8	#54
Young Adult	24-44	24	#56
Older Adult	45-64	26	#55
Seniors	65+	20	#53
Median Age		41	

Notable

- Median age (41) is higher than the state average (38)
- 10% live in poverty
- 57% of Ripley County's population lives outside incorporated cities/towns

Dynamics		2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)		+0.8 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income		\$66,942	#45
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income		\$52,541	#58
Poverty Rate		10 %	#60



Busching Covered Bridge

Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments	
\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$ 700,000	OCRA – State Revolving Loan Fund Grant <i>Town of Milan – “Basketball Town USA” Water Tower</i>

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
\$ 86,000	Versailles Pocket Park	\$3,000,000	SEI Career Center
\$ 100,000	Milan Street Lights & Banners	\$ 500,000	The Tanglewood (Phase 2)

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong ‘can do’, supportive, generous, and friendly people Significant projects in Batesville (Children’s museum opening, Arts & Innovation Hub) Bike & Pedestrian Masterplan implementation, including trails connecting communities, wayfinding, etc. 2025 Strategic Investment Plan adopted Opportunity to learn from work in other counties (e.g., Dillsboro Arts) Community-based action planning experience with the ICI team from Ball State 	

Challenging Pulls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed-upon need to strengthen communication and public awareness re activities and opportunities as well as need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase youth, young adult connectedness Increase collaboration Connecting communities (across county) Solidify a community identity Challenges attracting pass through traffic to stop, explore, and stay 	

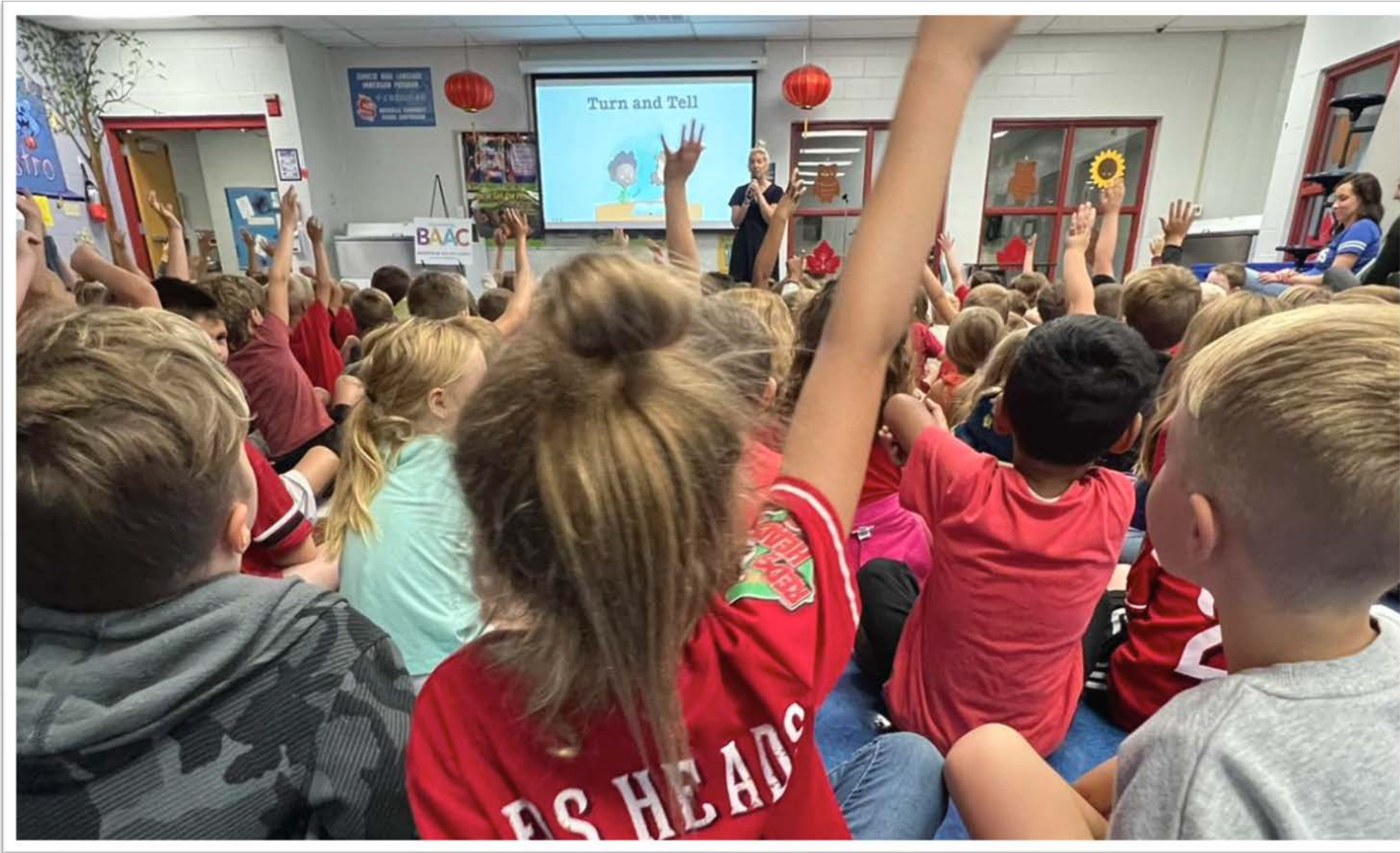


Ripley County Film Fest at the Damm Theatre, Osgood

Accelerate Rural Indiana READI Projects

Arts and culture related projects that Batesville’s regional development organization supports also exert positive momentum for Franklin and Ripley Counties.

	READI Investment
Kids Discovery Factory	1,000,000
Skate Park	50,000
Ivy Tech Welding Program	400,000
Arts & Innovation Hub	2,000,000
Trails & Gathering Space @ Margaret Mary Health	2,000,000
Rural Schools Reimagined	3,200,000



Batesville Area Arts Council Arts in Education

Switzerland County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

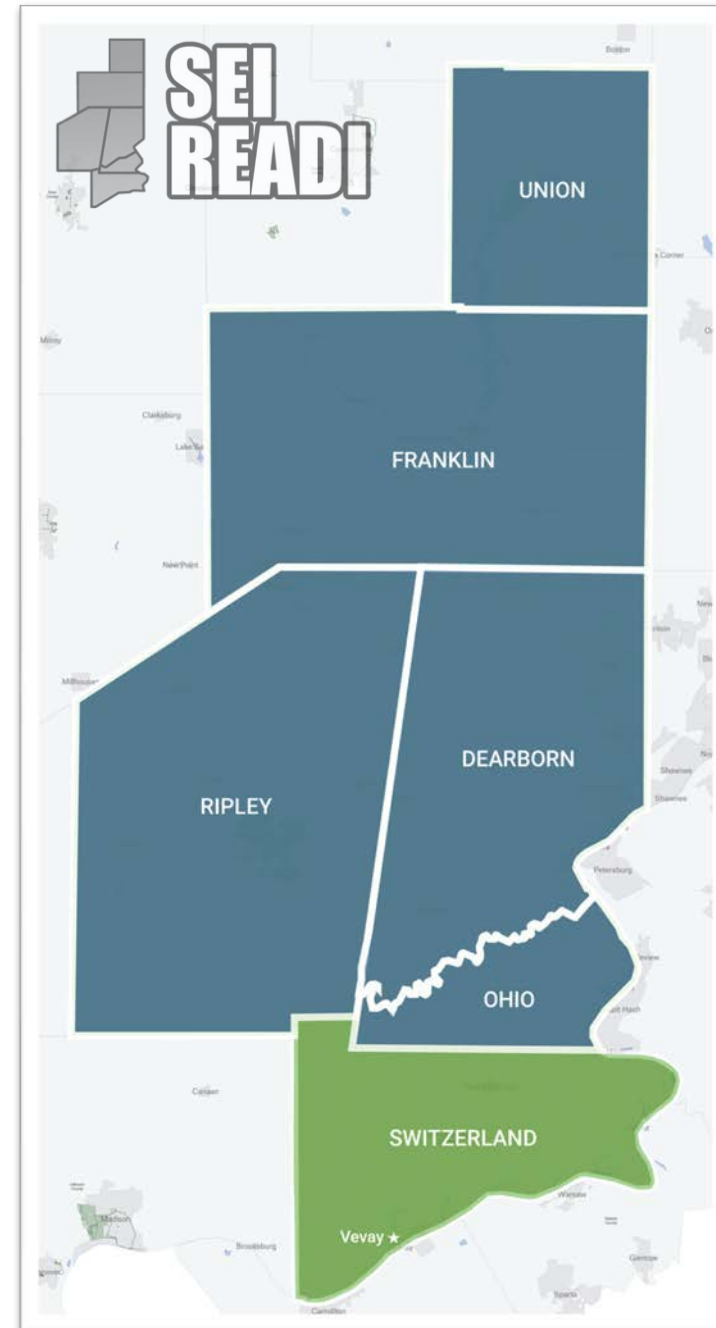
Arts & Culture Identity

Switzerland County, with a population of just over 10,000, sits along the Ohio River and is steeped in heritage shaped by its Swiss founders. Known as the *“Rhineland of America,”* the county became a national leader in early American wine grape production. Today, that legacy is celebrated annually through the Swiss Wine Festival in Vevay, recognized by USA Today readers as the Best Small Town in the Midwest in both 2023 and 2024.

History is omnipresent, most prominently in Vevay’s 275 historic buildings and landmarks that reflect the county’s prosperity during its wine and river trade years. Despite lacking railroads, Switzerland County thrived as a river community, with commerce flowing along the Ohio. Key figures include like Benjamin Schenck, a steamboat magnate whose 19th-century mansion remains a symbol of the county’s golden era. Today, the mansion is home to modern tattoo artist and entrepreneur Kat Von D, linking past grandeur with contemporary cultural flair.

With its combination of rich history, preserved architecture, scenic river setting, and modern recognition, Switzerland County continues to embody both tradition and vitality. Its cultural identity is rooted in immigrant ingenuity blending heritage with small-town charm and a dash of quirk making it a distinct destination.

Switzerland County’s arts and culture scene blends rich history with a flair for fun. Anchored by the Community Art Center of Switzerland County and the Historic Hoosier Theatre, the county showcases creativity through festivals like the ***Goatauqua Art Fair – inspired by the beloved***



Fred the Goat – along with the Sleepy Hollow Arts & Craft Show, Swiss Wine Festival, Vevay Volkfest, and Wheels on Fire Vevay. Heritage is central to this identity.

A **thriving creative industry adds vibrancy**, from The fAxtory Music Co. and Lizzy Green Mosaics to local potters, quilters, woodworkers, musicians, and designers. Unique touches, like Kat Von D's garden of 30,000 Black Tulips, reinforce the county's spirit of quirkiness and fun. The high school provides a strong arts education including art and drama clubs, ensuring new generations of talent. Together, these assets make Switzerland County's cultural identity both rooted and refreshing, historic yet contemporary, and always marked by creativity, community pride, and a touch of playful charm.

What You Want for the Future c. 2035

Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Switzerland's needs.

1. A Vibrant, Walkable Downtown Core

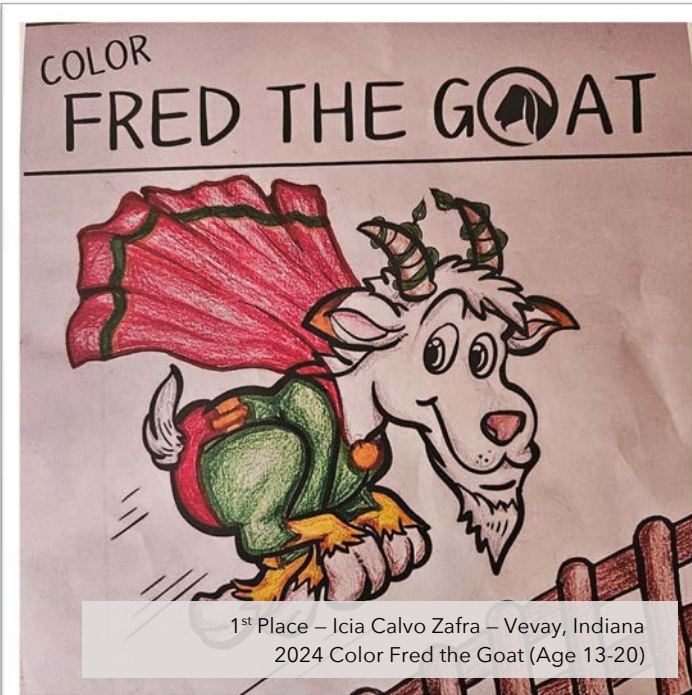
By 2035, downtown Vevay is a lively hub where every storefront is filled, restaurants thrive, and walking trails connect residents and visitors to local shops, stories, and scenic assets. Beautification efforts and adaptive reuse of historic buildings create a cohesive and attractive small-town experience.

2. Heritage Identity-Driven Growth that Embraces the Quirky and Unique

Switzerland County confidently preserves and promotes what makes it different. Quirks become cornerstones of local pride, storytelling, and tourism. As part of the Cincinnati metro, the county maintains its distinct character while inviting creative entrepreneurs and remote workers to call it home.

3. Nature as a Lifestyle and Economic Driver

Waterways, trails, and wildlife define daily life. Birding, boating, hunting, camping, and natural beauty are preserved and elevated. As a destination for outdoor recreation, the county attracts both visitors and residents seeking wellness, adventure, and a deep connection to the land.



4. Celebrated History, Arts, and Architecture

From the Underground Railroad to winemaking, history is reinterpreted for today. The local theatre and community art center thrive with diverse talent and professional management. Revitalized historic assets are homes for arts, culture, and community gathering – supporting economic vitality and heritage pride.

5. Connected Communities and Future-Ready Infrastructure

High-speed internet countywide, active civic engagement, and clear wayfinding and communication, better connects Switzerland County – physically and socially. Collaboration across communities grows, drawing in new residents and energizing long-time locals to shape the future together.

What You Have

Switzerland County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
50	Arts	
30	Artists & Creative Business	Artists & Creative Businesses – The fAxetory Music Co, Lizzy Green Mosaics, Cardinal Quilts, Stoned Gnomes, Bev’s Pottery, Riveraire Fibreworks, Kat Von D & Von D Land, woodworkers, authors, visual artists, makers, musicians, and designers Arts Organizations & Groups – Community Art Center of Switzerland County, Historic Hoosier Theatre, Switzerland County High School Art and Drama Clubs Public Library in Vevay Historical Groups – Musee de Vonage, Switzerland County Historical Society, Racing Performance Museum Places – Benjamin Schenck Mansion, Patriot Old Jail and General Store, Thiebaud Farmstead, and 5 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, Vevay Historic District and walking tour Festivals – Goatauqua Art Fair, Sleepy Hollow Arts & Craft Show, Swiss Wine Festival, Vevay Volkfest, Wheels on Fire Vevay Nature & Trails – Ohio River and Ohio River Scenic Byway Other Places & Spaces – Belterra Casino Resort and Event Center, Paul Ogle Riverfront, Larry Tolbert Fitness Trail, Patriot Memorial Park
2	Informal Group	
4	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
12	Public Art + Fred the Goats	
2	Organizations	
28	Culture	
11	History & Heritage	
7	Events & Traditions	
7	Parks & Trails	
3	Funders & Friends	
16	Misc.	
In addition to the highlights presented here. The Full Inventory with individual asset details is available as well Inventory sheets for each county Interactive regional map		

County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	9,737	#88
Square Miles	221	
Population / Sq Mi	45	
% of Co.		
No cities or towns larger		
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
Town Vevay (seat)	1,741	18%
Town Patriot	201	2%
Everywhere Else	7,795	80%

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census)
(fractions rounded to full digit)

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	6	#85
School Age 5-17	18	#86
College Age 18-24	7	#89
Young Adult 24-44	23	#87
Older Adult 45-64	27	#87
Seniors 65+	20	#88
Median Age	43	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	+3 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$60,219	#77
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$43,212	#91
Poverty Rate	13 %	#31

Notable.

- 5 years older than the state at the median
- 2nd lowest per capita income at the median with 13% living in poverty
- 80% of county population lives outside incorporated cities/towns
- +3% population growth outpaced the state (2%)



Historic Hoosier Theater, Vevay

Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments

\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$ 467,327	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Matching grant to build assets and support charitable activities</i>

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals

1.0	2.0
-- none	-- none

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes

- Upcoming installation of outdoor stage
- Activity and attention related to Kat Von D relocation (e.g., 30,000 Black Tulips, Hello Vevay, Wheels on Fire Cruise-In, Von D Land store opening)
- Community commitment to Hoosier Theatre and planned improvements
- Opportunity to capitalize on Creation Museum (Petersburg, KY) for art tourism

Challenging Pulls

- Agreed-upon need for greater communication across sectors and communities, more diverse group of doers and volunteers
- Need for additional attraction and retention strategies (e.g., adding bike lanes, install EV access stations)
- Challenges advocating for appropriate policies and addressing unfavorable ones
- Challenges solidifying / uniting around a community identity



Goatauqua Community Art Fair, Vevay



Bev's Pottery and Kip Meyerhoff, Author



Community Art Center of Switzerland County, Vevay



Swiss Wine Festival, Vevay

Union County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

Arts & Culture Identity

Bordering Ohio with just over 7,000 residents, Union County is among Indiana's smallest counties by population and size. Its seat, Liberty, and the surrounding towns reflect a rural character shaped by deep agricultural roots that continue to define the economy and community life today.

Settlement began in the early 1800s, when pioneers moved into the fertile Whitewater Valley. Among them was William Beard, a Quaker and noted conductor on the Underground Railroad. Agriculture has remained central from those early days to the present, with family farms and agribusiness still anchoring local identity. Notable natives include Bob Jenkins, a nationally recognized motorsports broadcaster, whose career reflected the region's keen sense of storytelling and connection.

Union County also holds a unique distinction as home to Union County – College Corner Joint School District, the last operating joint state district in both Indiana and Ohio. Natural and recreational assets play a vital role: Whitewater Memorial State Park and Brookville Lake attract over a million annual visitors and sparked the county's motto, ***"Stopped for the lake, stayed for the life."*** With its historic legacy, cross-border ties, and enduring agricultural foundation, Union County offers a cultural identity that blends heritage, community pride, and natural beauty.

Union County offers ***a small but mighty foundation of arts and culture from which to grow, connect, and expand*** – including a growing inventory of public art that reflects and celebrates county identity. A strong community of creative entrepreneurs-designers, photographers,



traditional artists, makers, performers, and even a sound studio – anchor the creative business economy while adding vibrancy. The county’s active public library, informal groups like the Union County Knitting Club and Plain Air Union County Artists, and community events such as Live at Liberty and Harvest Fest provide residents and visitors with meaningful opportunities for arts engagement and connection.

Heritage is equally important to Union County’s cultural identity. The Union County Historical Society and Depot Museum, the historic Union County Courthouse, Templeton Cabin, and First Missionary Baptist Church preserve and interpret stories of early settlement, civic life, and faith traditions. Festivals such as Christmas in Our Hometown, the Liberty 4th of July Festival, and the Union County Fireman’s Festival Truck Show carry these traditions forward while strengthening community pride. Together with the county’s thriving recreation assets – Brookville Lake, Whitewater Memorial State Park, and Quakertown State Recreation Area – Union County presents a charming, peaceful “cool little county” to visit, stay, and grow.

What You Want for the Future c. 2035

Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Union’s needs.

1. **Connected and Vibrant Communities**

Downtown Liberty thrives as a lively hub, beautification efforts span public and private spaces, cohesive signage unifies across towns, and active Main Street programs reflect strong local investment and pride.

2. **Flourishing Arts, Culture, and Local Economy**

Public art, community theatre, creative entrepreneurs, and small businesses energize the county. Farmers markets, pop-ups, and independent shops thrive alongside arts-integrated childcare and shared creative spaces. Together, they reflect an economy fueled by local identity, culture, and entrepreneurship-and a strong preference for independent businesses over national chains.

3. **Engaged Citizens and Collaborative Leadership**

Volunteerism is thriving, residents in all corners of the county feel connected, and a “we can” spirit drives grassroots action. Local government, Main Street, UCDC (development), and



Union County Picnic Table Public Art Project, Liberty



Live in Liberty

civic leaders work in sync, while collaboration with Franklin County realize lake-centered economic and tourism opportunities

4. Parks, Recreation, and Natural Assets

Expanded trails, upgraded parks, and revived destinations support year-round recreation. Revitalized natural spaces and active ballfields provide safe, family-friendly places to gather, play, and enjoy Union County's outdoors.

5. Emerging Momentum and Shared Energy

New community gardens, an expanded library, and community events like Food Truck Fridays spark engagement. These early efforts reflect a shared commitment to growth, creativity, and collective action.

What You Have

Union County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
41	Arts	
24	Artists & Creative Business	
4	Informal Group	
4	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
9	Public Art + Quilt Trail	
–	Organizations	
15	Culture	
4	History & Heritage	
7	Events & Traditions	
3	Parks & Trails	
1	Funders & Friends	
15	Misc.	
<p>In addition to the highlights presented here. The Full Inventory with individual asset details is available as well</p> <p>Inventory sheets for each county</p> <p>Interactive regional map</p>		<p>Artists & Creative Businesses – Pohler Fabrics, Artistry Farm, Copper Dream Art Studio, Provincial Papercrafter, fiber artists, photographers, dance studio, designers, visual artists, writers, makers</p> <p>Arts Organizations & Groups – Union County Knitting Club, Plein Air Union County Artists, Live at Liberty, Creative Writing Club</p> <p>Public Library in Liberty</p> <p>Historical Groups – Union County Historical Society and Depot Museum, First Missionary Baptist Church 1805 Templeton Cabin, Union County Courthouse</p> <p>Festivals – Harvest Fest, Christmas in our Hometown, Liberty 4th of July Festival, Union County's Fireman's Festival Truck Show, Union County Extension Homemaker Bazaar</p> <p>Nature & Trails – Brookville Lake, Whitewater Memorial State Park, Quakertown State Recreation Area, Union County Nature Park</p> <p>Other Places & Spaces – Liberty 44 Speedway, Whitewater Ranch</p>

County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	7,087	#91
Square Miles	161	
Population / Sq Mi	43	
% of Co.		
No cities or towns larger		
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
Town Liberty (seat)	2,000	28%
Town West College Corner	545	8%
Everywhere Else	4,542	64%

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census)
(fractions rounded to full digit)

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	5	#91
School Age 5-17	16	#91
College Age 18-24	7	#91
Young Adult 24-44	23	#91
Older Adult 45-64	27	#91
Seniors 65+	23	#91
Median Age	45	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	-3 %	#92
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$64,648	#56
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$51,547	#66
Poverty Rate	11 %	#46

Notable

- Fastest SHRINKING county in the state
- 7 years older than the state at the median
- 11% live in poverty
- 64% of county population lives outside incorporated cities/towns



Plant Your Roots Here by Leah Pinney, Liberty

Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments

\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$ 736,083	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Matching grant to build assets and support charitable activities</i>

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals

1.0		2.0
\$ 38,000	Union County Historic Water Works <i>See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.</i>	— none

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes

- A charming downtown
- The leadership of a strong community foundation
- A strong public library with community services and arts programs completing expansion
- New engagement through two community gardens, Food Truck Friday, and more
- Focused local identity in action (e.g., avoid national businesses like Dollar Store)
- Recently developed county vision documents

Challenging Pulls

- Need to develop “we can” attitude, connect with residents outside largest communities, and bridge mindsets
- Commuter class has time challenges engaging/participating within the community
- Challenges cooperating for mutual benefit (e.g., need for Franklin and Union Counties to work together – maximize benefit of the lake)
- Capacity challenges at county, towns, Main Street, and UCDC levels
- Concerning health statistics (high rates of opioid overdoses, smoking, and suicide)



Pohler Fabrics, Liberty



Framemaker Gallery, Liberty



Templeton Log Cabin; Courthouse Square Historic District



Clockwise: UC Hype Youth Program, Union Square Project Design, Young Author inspired by local coffee shop, Union County Parks & Recreation



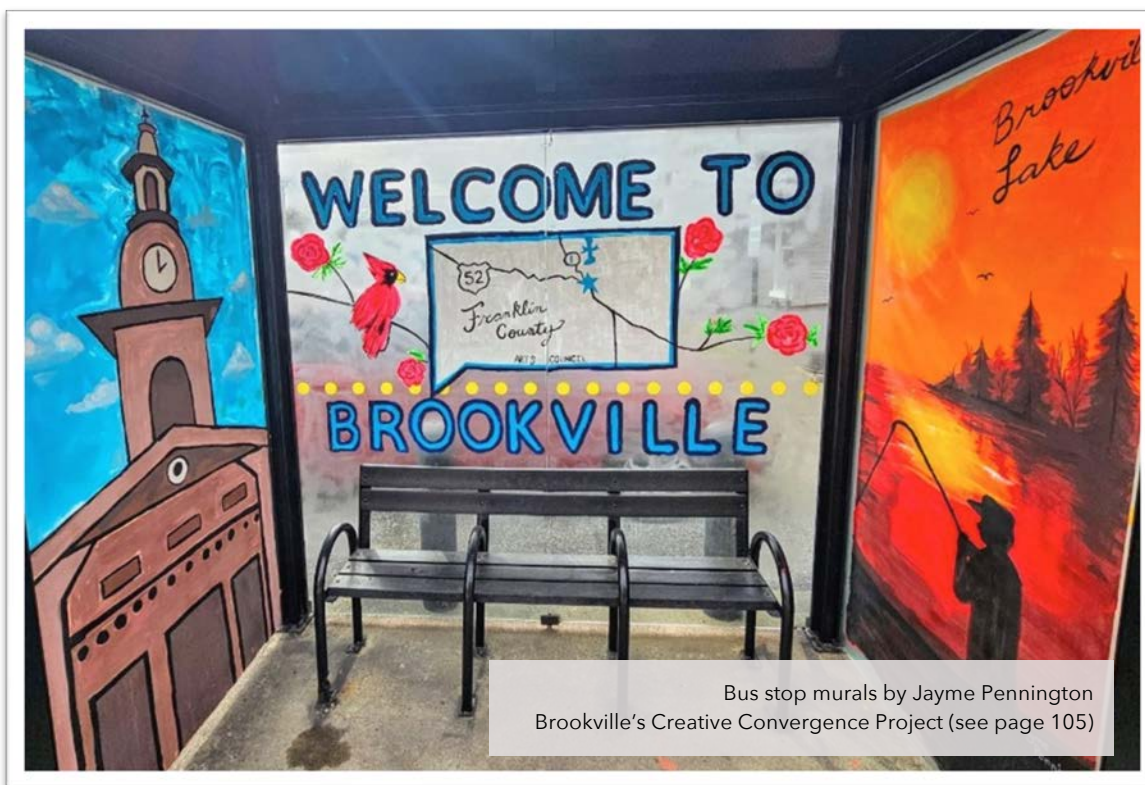
Arts & Culture Plan

THE TOOLKIT



Introduction

This plan also includes a toolkit of ideas and inspiration drawn from national and local examples to spark creativity and show what's possible. These resources align directly with goals and are designed to deepen understanding, build confidence, and equip leaders with the tools they need to translate ideas into action. Not every idea or resource will fit every community, but all can inform new approaches.



This section is full of hyperlinks (as is the document overall). All were working when this document was completed. We know that those change with time and hope you will search for the resources if you find a dead link sometime in the future.

Toolkit Contents



- A. Ideas & Inspiration
 - 1. Collections of Ideas
 - 2. Place & Identity
 - 3. Public Art
 - 4. Artists & Creative Businesses
 - 5. Marketing
- B. Project Funding
- C. Data & Advocacy
- D. Glossary

Index of Recommended Tools



	page
Better Block	37
Cultivating P.L.A.C.E. (The Power of 10)	40
Business Training for Artists	45
Local Government Actions	51
Readiness Assessment	63
One Small Thing	63
Coffee & Calendars	64
Creative Convergence	105
America in Bloom	106
Public Art Archive	107
IAC's Artist Services Hub	109
IEDC Programs & Resources	110
Calendar Aggregator	111
CreatiNG Places	112

A. Ideas & Inspiration

Overview

This section provides ideas, tools, guides, and resources from the region, state, and across the country. These should both provide source for inspiration and reduce the learning curve for communities and local leaders.

Collections of Ideas

- Arts Midwest [Ideas Hub](#)
- Indiana Arts Commission list of [Ideas](#)
- Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper [examples](#)
- NEA Our Town [past projects](#) from across the country
- Americans for the Arts [database of projects](#) from across the country
- Better Blocks [free open-source designs](#)
- [10 Alleys & Streetscapes](#) from 10 Years of Patronicity
- [Social Life Project](#) of the Placemaking Fund
- Explore [CODAworx](#) and [Public Art Archive](#) for public art inspiration
- [1,205 Ways to Improve Your Hometown.](#) (number changes every time and idea is added) a search for “art” brings up over 690 results, and the numbers keep growing
- [99% of the best things you can do for your town don’t require anyone’s permission](#)

Recommended Reading

- [From Possibilities to Reality: Save Your Small Town with these Uniquely Do-Able Ideas...](#) (2024) from Debra Brown (Biloxi, MS) & Becky McCray (Alva, OK) of [SaveYourTown](#)
- Phil Eich & the [Storyville Substack](#) (Bay City, MI)
- [John Shepard](#) (David City, NE)
- [Walkable City](#) (2013)
- All the books and toolkits [here](#)



Recommended Tool

Capacity Assistance Program

Two SEI READI communities have completed Indiana Arts Commission’s [Creative Convergence](#) program.

Links to their projects:

- **Dillsboro** created its “[Arts Creator Space](#)”
- **Brookville** implemented “[Small Town Pics](#)”

This is a team-based workshop and funding program aimed at creative community development. Community Teams that participate will learn how to work together to advance arts and creativity in their community through training and a funded project.

It equips community leaders, organizational representatives, and creatives to:

- Embed arts and creativity into community and economic development strategies
- Collaborate effectively across sectors
- Engage residents in meaningful, inclusive ways

The Recommendation

Contact IAC to find out when applications will reopen.

Anne Johansson, Community Services
Program Manager, AJohansson@iac.IN.gov



This program is a partnership between the [Indiana Arts Commission](#) and the [Indiana Communities Institute at Ball State University](#)

Place & Identity

Start Here

- Project for Public Spaces [definition](#) and [deeper resources](#)
- [Creative Placemaking Technical Assistance](#), Tools & Resource Library (NEA)

Then Check these How-to Resources

- National Association of Counties: [Creative County Placemaking Initiative](#) with resources
- National League of Cities
 - [Put Your City's Public Art on the Map with the Public Art Archive](#)
 - [Activating Civic Infrastructure through the Arts](#)
 - [Arts Help Rural Cities Creatively Support Community Mental Health](#)
 - [Improving Community Health and Resilience through the Arts](#)
 - [How Cities Use the Arts to Promote Youth and Community Development](#)
- And for development projects: [Indiana Community Development Toolkit](#) (READI)

Then Check Rural Specific Guidance

- [Community Arts & Culture Guide](#) (<https://rural.indiana.edu/>)
- [Thriving Downtowns: an investment playbook for rural Appalachia](#) (2023)
- National Governor's Association's [Rural Prosperity through the Arts...](#) & [Action Guide](#)
- USDA: "[Rural America Placemaking Toolkit](#)"

Examples of Streetscape & Façade Programs

- Main Street Streetscape Beautification (Rushville, IN)
- [Building Renovation Assistance Program – BRAP](#) (New Castle, IN)

And Examples of Alley & Underused Space Activations

- [6th Steet Arts Alley & Parklet](#) (Columbus, IN) and [Pocket Park](#) (Versailles, IN)

Location	Resources
411 6th Street, Columbus, IN 47201	6th Street Arts Alley Closure Process.pdf
www.artsincolumbus.org/arts-alley	Find an Artist Toolkit and Street Art List
Contact Organization	Indiana Arts Commission Artist Services Hub
Columbus Area Arts Council	More under Public Art

- [Cartoon Alley](#) (Nappanee, IN)
- [SEI Community Gardens](#) (Multiple in Region)



AIB promotes and builds vibrant and sustainable communities through volunteerism and education emphasizing flowers, plants, trees, heritage, and environmental and lifestyle enhancements.

THE MODEL has been successful in the hundreds of cities of all sizes (*including Rising Sun, Greendale*) with a sweet spot capping around 20,000 population.

- 40+ page assessments with detailed short- and long-term recommendations (\$10,000s FMV)
- Other Program Elements: annual symposium, national awards, webinars, and resources

COST & FUNDING

- Subscription starts at \$1,700/year (*by pop.*)
- Cities pay for lodging (AIB covers other travel)
- Convening registration (*if applicable*)
- After that it is all about how much a city does on the ground to implement recommendations,

Some communities recruit garden centers as committee members and sponsors. There is also a grant program for towns along CN Railroad lines.

CHAPTER BENEFITS

Created when 3+ cities in an area participate, these come with a 25% discount and quarterly check-ins.

The Recommendation

We recommend that communities join America in Bloom to provide a structure to their work, particularly related to Goal 1 – and join as a group to become a chapter. Contact <https://americainbloom.org/>.

Public Art

Start Here

- [Strategies for Public Art: A Guide to Creating Engaging Public Art with your Indiana Community](#) by the Putnam County Mural Project folks

Then Check Topical Guides

- Places of Possibility (POP) Public ART & Placemaking: [Toolkit for Rural Communities](#)
- From Bloomberg Associates:
 - [Asphalt Art Guide & Safety Study](#)
 - [Baltimore Toolkit](#)

And Examples of Public Art that is More than Murals

- [ARTtsy Switchboxes](#) (Madison, IN) and [BoxBox](#) (Muncie, IN)
- ["C" Bike Racks](#) (Columbus, IN)
- [Sidewalk Poetry](#) (Multiple) and Iowa City's [Lit Walk](#)

Jumpstart Public Art Marketing

- Host a volunteer weekend to upload your inventory to PAA over pizza!

“Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.

[Creative Placemaking.](#)

Ann Markusen & Anne Gadwa for National Endowment for the Art, 2010

Recommended Tool
PUBLIC ART
ARCHIVE
publicartarchive.org



About

The [Public Art Archive™](#) (PAA) is a **free, continually growing online database of public artworks throughout the U.S. and abroad**. Artists and organizations contribute completed projects to the portal at **NO COST**.

By **making all projects discoverable on the world's largest centralized source of public art information**, artists and organizations can increase the accessibility and visibility of public art in every community.

The Recommendation

This project made clear how **little of the region's public art is accessible online** – on digital maps, in news articles, on websites. Even then, information about the work or its artist is limited. Some places have custom map sites that are difficult to maintain or to connect with intended audiences.

This is a **missed opportunity of spectacular proportions** that doesn't need to be.

We recommend that every community, county, and the region overall focus on PAA first for all of its public art. Everything in a one place is regionalism in practice.

- [Explore art](#) and their [featured collections](#).
- Request a [Demo](#), PAArchive@WeAreCreativeWest.org
- If you want a custom look, they work at low cost (e.g., \$500/yr to embed in your site).

The National League of Cities agrees with us!
[Put Your City's Public Art on the Map with the Public Art Archive](#)

Templates for Implementing a Public Art Program

- Sample Public Art Guidelines from [Madison](#) and Fort Wayne [Fort Wayne](#)
- Sample Public Art Master Plans from [Bloomington](#) and [Plainfield](#)
- [Templates](#) from the Public Art Archive for almost every part of a public art program and its implementation

Sample Ordinances

- Mural Permitting – [Bloomington, MN](#)
- Overlay Zones & Districts (Gateway or Design)
- [Franklin, IN](#)
- [Rushville, IN](#) (starting on page 65 of *linked* document)
- [Portland OR](#)

Sample Public Art Grant Programs

These are programs created within cities versus external funders of public art.

- [Montrose, CO](#)
- [Stuart, FL](#)
- [Iowa City, IA](#)
- [Indianapolis, IN](#)
- [West Columbia, SC](#)
- [Amarillo, TX](#)
- Chicago, San Francisco, and Nashville also have nice public-facing guides

Other Resources

- ABA: [1st Amendment Limitations on Government Regulation of Artwork](#)
- Americans for the Arts [Public Art Network](#) (professional development, resources, etc.)
- Online collections and artist connections: [CODAworx](#) and [Public Art Archive](#)



Looking for Data on Economic Impact of Public Art?

Take a look at [CODAreview The Power of Public Art](#) volumes 1 and 2 (2024-2025)

Then Join the Public Art Network! Anyone thinking about or managing a public art program should be signed up to the [Americans for the Arts Public Art Network](#) newsletter and list serv.

Digging Deeper into Case Example PUBLIC ART IN EDMOND, OK pop ~94,000

[Edmond's Public Art Program](#) has helped fill the city with a sense of community and culture. The Edmond Visual Arts Commission is responsible for all of the public art around the city, and is in charge of expanding the art collection, promoting the public art program, and maintaining the pieces. ***These pieces are funded through donations, partnerships, and construction project 1% set aside funds.***

The public art program ***began in 2001, with 13 pieces*** in the inventory. Now, ***there are over 300 pieces*** with many installations from Oklahoma natives and other artists who are known and admired throughout the world. The City's art program has created a great attraction for tourists and given Edmond residents something to be proud of.

You can view all of the beautiful murals and sculptures [on the public art website](#), during the guided Art in Public Places Tour or on your own self-guided tour by foot or bicycle:

- [Bicycle Art Tour](#): Scenic ride with over 20 pieces
- [Downtown Art Tour](#): More than 30 art pieces
- [BoulevART Art Tour](#): More than 20, min. 1/block
- [UCO Art Tour](#): More than 15 sculptures
- [Historic Art Tour](#): More than 20 sculptures



Artists & Creative Businesses

- Join/Learn: Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, Ivy Tech, Extension, Local Arts Council
- Check out
 - [Artists Thrive](#), which aims to raise the value of artists in every community (especially its [National Resource Hub](#))
 - [Springboard for the Arts](#), which supports artists with the tools to make a living (especially [Work of Art](#))

Other Funds, Ideas & Opportunities

- Arts Midwest [Ideas Hub](#) and [Gig Fund](#)
- Center for Cultural Innovation [Investing in Artists](#) (funding), [resources](#), labs, programs
- [CERF+ \(Craft Emergency Relief Fund\)](#)
- [Indiana Artisan](#)
- [Traditional Arts Indiana](#)
- [Vore](#) – arts fund (great idea to copy)
- Marion Design Co. – [10 years of intern cohorts](#) (another idea to copy)
- List of funding [opportunities for musicians](#) (entrepreneurship resources listed as well)

Indiana Arts Commission Programs for Artists

[Vision & Venture](#) – program for creatives with <1 year of business experience
[On-Ramp Creative Accelerator](#) – 3-day intensive workshop, [decentralizing in 2027](#)
[The Creative Leap](#) – 6-week virtual workshop series
[Work in Progress Exchange](#) – 2025 pilot now an example for local endeavors

Teaching Artist Opportunities

- [Teaching Artist Guild](#)
- [Arts for Learning](#)

Working with Specific Populations

- Indiana Arts Commission [Lifelong Arts Indiana](#)
- IU Center for Rural Engagement [Creative Arts for Vets](#)



See also the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation's [Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Playbook 3.0](#).



Recommended Tool Indiana Arts Commission's Artist Services Hub

The Indiana Arts Commission's [Artist Services Hub](#), provides resources for artists, communities, and organizations to support your creative community.

- Are You An Artist? [Help your career thrive.](#)
- Are you an arts administrator, arts programmer, or agent who wants to support artists in your community? [Connect with Creatives](#)
- Looking to bring arts to your local community but don't know where to start? [Engage Community](#)

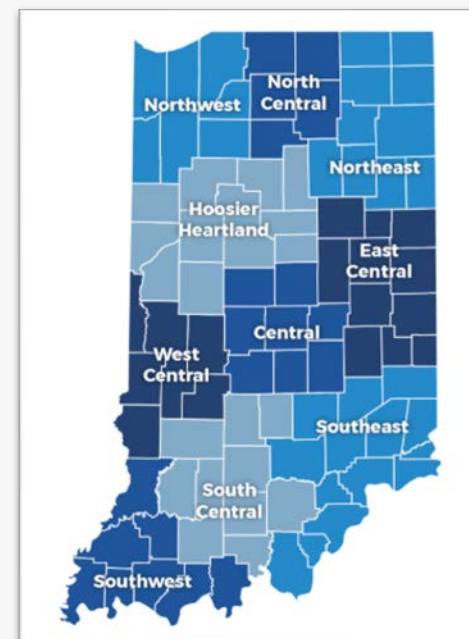
The Recommendation

Contact IAC to find out more.

Jordan Adams, Artist Services
Program Manager, joadams1@iac.in.gov

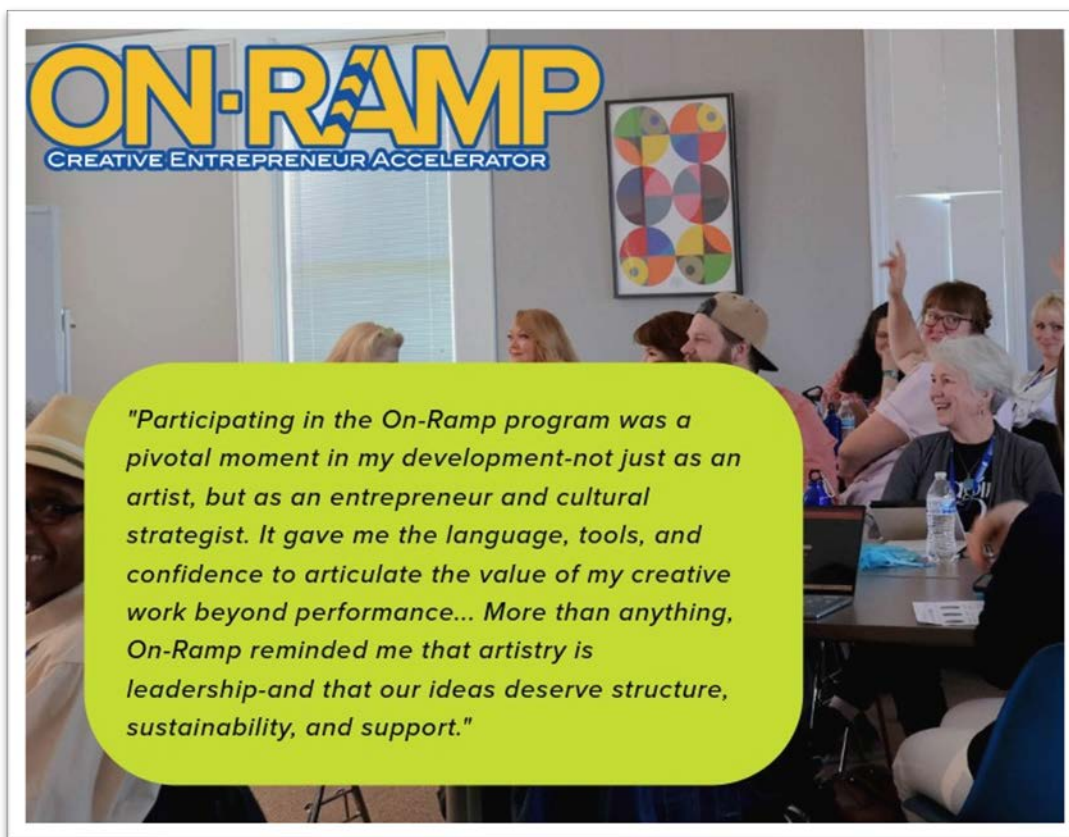


Find your local
[Small Business
Development
Center](#)
regional office
entrepreneurial
support



Entrepreneurship & Business Assistance

- Indiana [SBA](#) provides FREE business technical assistance
- [Lawyers for the Arts](#) provides FREE to artists and small nonprofits in Indiana
- [Freelancers Union](#) provides support systems for independent workers
- Universities in the region have programs to partner with such as:
 - IU [Innovates](#) and IU Jacobs School of Music [Innovation](#)
 - IU East [Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Opportunities for Self-Starters \(BOSS\) Program](#)
- Minerva Financial Arts – [Financial Education](#)



[Indiana Arts Commission On-Ramp](#) creative entrepreneur accelerator program, decentralizing in 2027

Recommended Tool

IEDC [Entrepreneur Support](#)

- ConnectIND: Hub for Indiana Entrepreneurs
- Indiana Small Business Development Center
- Innovate WithIN (high school pitch competition)
- gener8tor (early-stage startup accelerator)
- Ecosystem Navigator
- Indiana Technical Assistance Program
- Indiana Procurement Assistance & Certification Training Initiative

The Recommendation

[Contact IEDC](#) to find out more.



Check out your county's [Indiana Entrepreneurship Scorecard](#).

INDIANA
FOR THE BOLD

Model in the Field [ARTrepreneurship](#)

An 8-week, cohort educational program for artists in that region who wish to establish their own businesses and generate revenue from their work



A collaboration among Heartland Art Center, Marshall County Economic Development Center, and the North Central Indiana Small Business Development Center



Your Input

Leveling Up Marketing

In focus groups, we asked arts, culture, and history leaders how tourism can help them do their job better. We asked the same in reverse of tourism leaders. Here is some of what you suggested.

Marketing Arts & Culture

To successfully market and promote events, Tourism shared that they need event information:

- At least 6 weeks in advance (one year in advance for reoccurring events), and
- In text along with a high-resolution photo. This helps with storytelling and quality promotional efforts (e.g., print).

It's also recommended that events always be created as a Facebook "event" so it's easier to promote and for online aggregators like Yodel to capture and market events. (It can't grab text from a photo, which means the opportunity is lost.)

Looking more broadly, folks identified the need for Tourism to evolve from a "heads-in-beds" mindset to today's best practice focusing on local and personalized experiences. This still means marketing outside the county and regional boundaries but focusing on the overall experience. To learn more and strengthen, Tourism encouraged others in their sector to join the Indiana Tourism Association.

In general, Tourism sector websites need to be modernized, interactive, and searchable, and the sector would be better served to collaborate across county lines to benefit all involved.

History, Heritage, & the Arts

Both arts and history organizations realized they are better served to work across the region within their peer groups and each other. In addition to identifying cross-promotional marketing and collaborative opportunities, they want to learn from one another and resource share.

And More from Us...

Here's an event to try: "[Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown](#)" (Fort Wayne, IN)

And an interesting grant program idea: [Digital Storefront Program](#) (South Bend, IN)

Recommended Tool

CALENDAR AGGREGATOR

One of the longest standing difficulties in this work, regardless of community size or location, is how to compile and manage a community events calendar. They are notoriously time consuming, incomplete, and underperforming.

However, options now exist that aggregate information instead of requiring data entry. Even better, those options are relatively low cost and easy to set up.



Example: <https://yodelevents.com>

Yodel collects and categorizes everything that is collectable according to filters the subscriber sets.

Population	Fees
Up to 15,000	\$1,000 set up + \$1,560 / year
15,000-60,000	\$1,200 set up + \$2,220 / year

But, it is only \$250 to add a widget to a partner's website. This means organizations and communities can mirror each other's content at a low cost. In addition, communities can sell ad space on their yodel app to cover costs.

The Recommendation

Get started today. The region only needs to:

- Agree to work together and share cost fairly
- Educate event entities on how to ensure their information is imported (e.g., "events" with details vs images on social media)
- Work with Yodel to set it up
- More at [//yodelevents.com/category/blog/](https://yodelevents.com/category/blog/)



B. Project Funding

National

- AARP Community Challenge and its [Quick Action Livability Grants](#)
- Bloomberg Philanthropy's [Arts Programs](#) especially its [Asphalt Art Grant Program](#)
- Literary Arts Fund's [General Operating and Innovation Project Grants](#)
- Levitt Foundation's [Venue & Music Grants](#)
- Main Street America [Funding Opportunities Resource](#)
- National Endowment for the Arts' [Grant Programs](#) especially [Our Town](#)
- National Endowment for the Humanities' [Grant Programs](#)

Indiana & Midwest

- Arts Midwest [Grant Programs](#) (More at [US Regional Arts Organizations](#))
- Center for Rural Engagement's [Arts & Culture Programs](#)
- Indiana Humanities' [Grant Programs](#)

Indiana Agencies

- Arts Commission
 - [Grant Programs](#)
 - [Training Programs](#) (some include project funding)
 - [Artist Services](#) (includes a list of grant sources)
- Destination Development Corp. [Partner Resources](#) (*grants eliminated in 2025 budget*)
- Housing & Community Development Authority (partnerships with [Patronicity](#))
 - [CreatiNg Places Crowdgranting](#) & [CreatiNg Livable Communities](#) (*box right*)
 - [My Community My Vision](#)
- Office of Community & Rural Affairs [Grant Programs, Main Street, and Other Initiatives](#)
- State Library [Services & Technology Act Grants](#)

CREATING
PLACES



Find Your Region-Specific Funds

[Community Foundation Lookup Tool](#)

Façade & Beautification Grant Programs

- Brookville's [Façade Grant](#)
- Lawrenceburg's
 - [Looking Up](#) and
 - [Property Improvement](#) Grants

Local Tourism Marketing Grants

Contact your tourism bureau for information.

- [Experience Franklin County](#)
- [Ohio County Tourism](#)
- [Vevay Switzerland County](#)

Southeast Indiana has already made good use of this program that matches crowdfunded projects and should continue to leverage it going forward.

Completed Projects, Crowdfunding & Matches

	#	\$ Goal (Match)	\$ Crowd-Raised
Dearborn			
Dillsboro	1	6,000	6,000
Franklin			
Brookville	2	89,551	94,985
Metamora	1	10,000	6,460
Oldenburg	1	25,000	30,405
Ripley			
Batesville	3	125,000	168,600
Milan	1	10,000	10,306
Osgood	1	35,000	48,182
Versailles	1	50,000	60,168
Union			
Liberty	1	50,000	57,180
West College Corner	1	50,000	56,082



How to use this page? Grant programs change over time, but these are some of the top funds to look at when implementing Goal 6.

C. Data & Advocacy

Arts Impact Data Sources

Start Here

- [Arts & Economic Prosperity](#) and [Arts Impact Explorer](#) (Americans for the Arts)

Indiana Specific

- [Embracing ... Indiana's Overlooked Economic Engine](#) (Pattern & Patherny Strategies)
- [How Indiana Municipalities are Utilizing Local Arts...](#) (Indiana Communities Institute)
- [Impact Points for Indiana's Cultural Districts](#) (Indiana Arts Commission)
- [Grants Dashboard](#) (Indiana Arts Commission)
- [Creative Economy State Profiles](#) (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies)
- [Arts Vibrancy 2024](#) Interactive Map, includes county-level (SMU DataArts)

Interactive National Sources

- [Research & Datasets](#) (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies)
- [Arts & Culture Data](#) (US Bureau of Economic Analysis)
- A [treasure trove of resources](#) from the National Endowment for the Arts
- Emerging Data Dashboard – [Wesley's Project](#)

Industry or Art Form-Specific

- [National Independent Venue Association: State of Live](#)
- [Why Making Music Matters](#)
- There are plenty more like these for every form of art or art activity if you search.

Quality of Life, Place & Health Data Sources

- [Indiana Communities Institute](#) (Ball State University)
- [Livability Index](#) and [Livability Data](#) (AARP)
- [County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#) (UW-Madison Population Health Institute)

Digging Deeper into Related Data

ECONOMIC & DEMOGRAPHIC

- [Center for Business & Economic Research](#) (BSU)
- [Indiana Business Research Center](#) (IU Kelley)
- Kauffman [Indicators of Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Center for Regional Development](#) (Purdue)
- [Indiana's Public Data](#) (STATS Indiana)
- [The Regionizer](#) (Stats America)

NONPROFITS & FOUNDATIONS

- ProPublica: [Nonprofit Explorer](#)
- [Guidestar](#) and [Foundation Directory](#) (Candid)
- [Tax Exempt Organization Search](#) (IRS)
- [Business Search](#) (Indiana Secretary of State)

OTHER INDIANA-SPECIFIC

- [State Data Center](#) (Indiana State Library)
 - [A-Z Statistics by Topic](#)
 - And [by County](#)
- Other IN.gov:
 - [IndianaMap](#)
 - [Indiana State Library](#)
 - [Indiana Gateway](#) (access to local tax and finance dashboard and reports)

TOURISM

- [Indiana Tourism Industry Research](#) (IDDC)
- Contact [Indiana Tourism Association](#) for more

MISCELLANEOUS

- [Community Commons](#)

Advocacy Tools

- [The Arts as Public Good](#) (research and resources from The Topos Partnership)
- [Americans for the Arts](#) has a plethora of tools for arts advocacy as well. [Start here.](#)



NEW RESOURCE FOR GOAL 3

New report identifies long-term benefits of **youth participation in community arts programs**, from well-being to future trajectories.

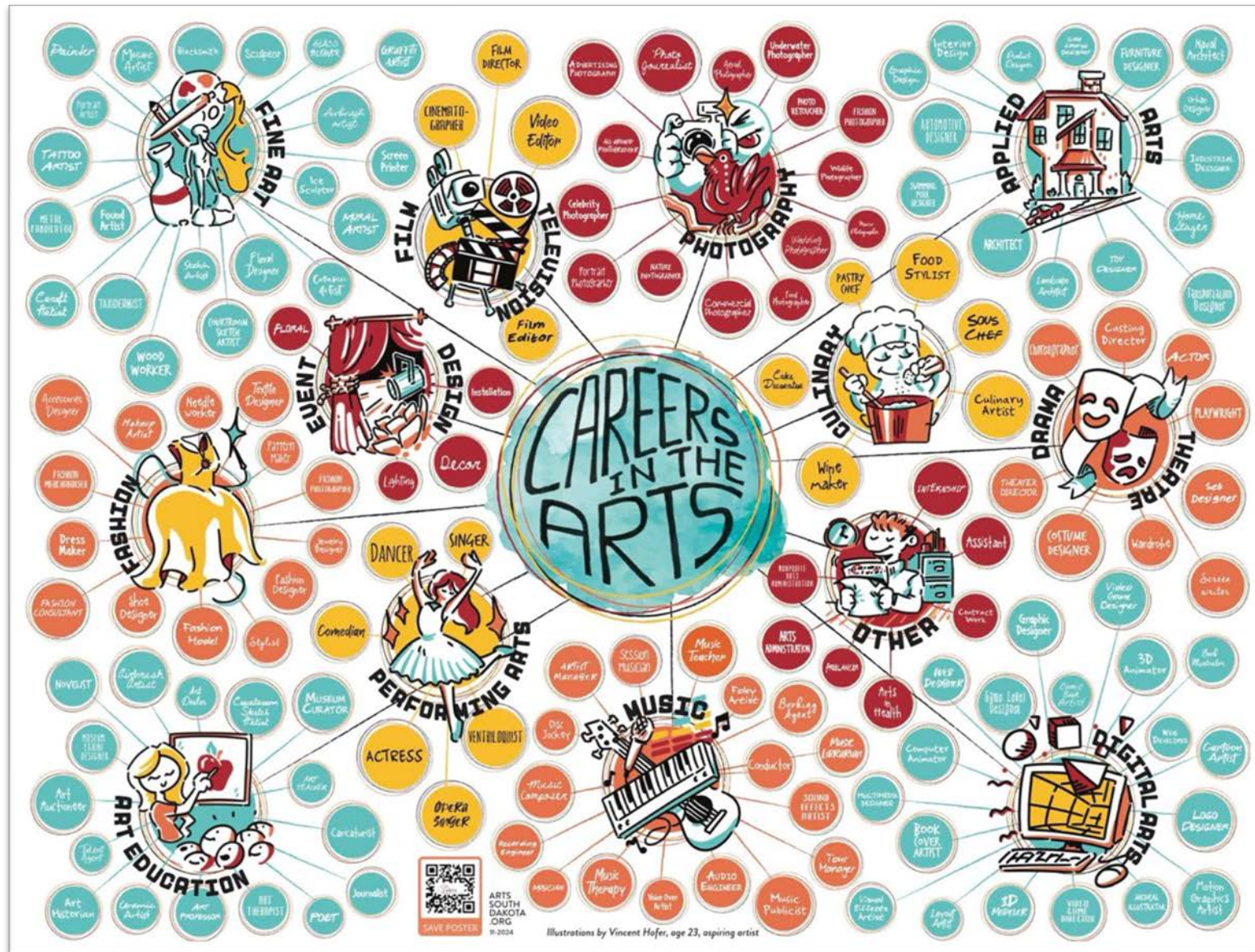
[Creative Expression, Caring Relationships, and Career Pathways: A Guide to Youth Outcomes in Community Arts Programs](#) (November 2025)

More to Get Started on 3.2.

See Aim's [Youth Councils Network](#). And more examples for 3.3. Juxtaposition Arts (MN) – [youth-focused](#), ArtMix Urban Artisans – [vocational and social](#), New Castle Career Center – [broadcast design](#)

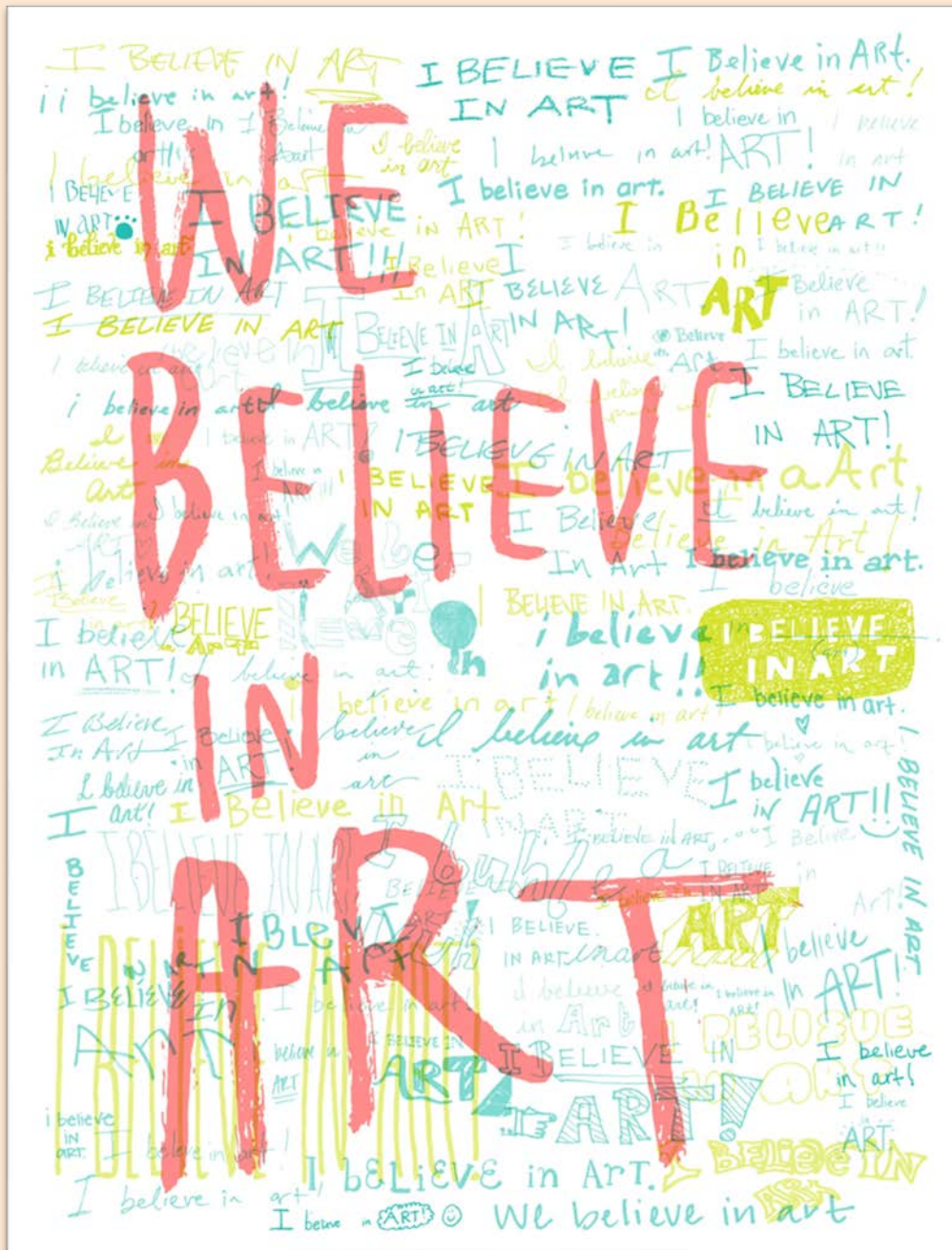
Careers in the Arts poster is another great tool to use while implementing this plan. It demonstrates the breadth of career opportunity available in arts and culture.

"Careers in the Arts" Poster, [Vincent Hofer](#) (2024) for Arts South Dakota.



Recommended Reading

Art as Community Change-Maker



Now is the time to learn more about how the creative sector can engage in community life and how community can benefit from arts and culture partnerships.

Here are just a few sources to empower your journey:

[Transforming the Workforce Development Sector through Arts...](#) (2020)

[Centering Creative Youth In Community Development](#) (2020)

[Creative Placemaking & Community Safety](#) (2018)

More of ArtsPlace America's Field Scans [here...](#)

And a few more that speak directly to artists and arts organizations:

[How to Partner with Your Chambers of Commerce: Connecting Community Impact to Arts & Chamber Partnerships](#) (2022)

[Handbook for Artists Working in Community](#) (2020)

[Artists at the Community Development Table](#) (2019)

Each of these sources supports implementation of one or more of the goals in this plan.

“Arts bind people to place *and* each other.”

Alberto Ibarguen, Former President
The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, 2018

Poster Image from
THE I / WE BELIEVE IN ART PROJECT
<https://www.publicspaceone.com>
[Sayuri's World](#) (2019)

D. Glossary

This process brought together arts organizations and professionals, civic and elected leaders, economic development, and community. This was a new combination for most participants – one that led each to share new concepts with the others. We carried the following into this plan:

Placemaking is a collaborative process that strengthens the bond between people and shared spaces. It goes beyond urban design by fostering creative uses of public spaces and honoring their physical and cultural identities.

Creative Placemaking focuses on strengthening communities with arts at the core.

Activating/Activation a creative event, installation, or project that is designed to bring an area to life and increase its visibility through the use of art

Creative Economy is the crossroads of creativity, culture, and commerce – workers in arts occupations, creative industries, and places. Creative economies thrive when a wide array of industries and workers are treated as active participants in it.

Hyperlocal is relating to or focusing on a small community or geographical area.

Philanthropy is the voluntary giving by individuals or groups to promote the common good, often through financial donations or time, with the aim of benefiting others and fostering a more civil and just society.

Quality of Place the characteristics of a community or region that make it attractive and desirable to live, work, and visit, including both tangible and intangible factors like environment, culture, and social connections.

Stakeholders are those who may benefit or be affected by a project. They may or may not take part directly in the decision-making process of that project.



Looking for more?

See [Key Concepts](#): [Community Arts & Culture Guide](#) (<https://rural.indiana.edu/>) and [Glossary](#): Arts & Planning Toolkit (a project of <https://www.mapc.org/>)

Definitions adapted from: <https://www.pps.org>, <https://www.creativeplacemaking.us>, <https://patternindy.com>, <https://rural.indiana.edu/>, and <https://artsandplanning.mapc.org/glossary-of-terms/> and <https://www.cultivategrandrapids.org/post/creative-placemaking-activating-art-in-public-spaces>

Abbreviations

AIB	America in Bloom <i>subscription-based technical assistance program</i>
ARPA	American Rescue Plan <i>federal COVID-relief program</i>
CARES	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, & Economic Security <i>federal COVID-relief program</i>
CCC	College and Community Collaboration <i>grant program of the Lilly Endowment Inc.</i>
CSA	Combined Statistical Area <i>defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget</i>
CVB	Convention & Visitors Bureau
FMV	Fair Market Value <i>approximate commercial cost</i>
GIFT	Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow <i>grant program of the Lilly Endowment Inc.</i>
IAC	Indiana Arts Commission <i>state agency</i>
IEDC	Indiana Economic Development Corporation <i>state agency</i>
ISBDC	Indiana Small Business Development Center <i>program of IEDC</i>
IMLS	Institute of Museum and Library Services <i>federal agency</i>
LEDO	Local Economic Development Organization
LEI	Lilly Endowment Inc. <i>private foundation, distinct from the Lilly Foundation</i>
NASAA	National Assembly of State Arts Agencies <i>NEA-funded association</i>
NEA	National Endowment for the Arts <i>federal agency</i>
NEH	National Endowment for the Humanities <i>federal agency</i>
OCRA	Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs <i>state agency</i>
REDO	Regional Economic Development Organization <i>SEI READI is one of these</i>
READI	Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative <i>a program of IEDC</i>
SEI	Southeast Indiana
SVOG	Shuttered Venue Operators Grant <i>federal COVID-relief program</i>
USRAO	US Regional Arts Organizations <i>NEA-funded association</i>



Arts & Culture Plan

APPENDIX



A. Data Tables

Overview

This section provides detailed data and context aligned with discussion in the body of the plan. They are included to help the region with benchmarking and case-making with leaders. At the same time, they provide support for the regional overview, the State of the Arts assessment, goals, and strategies overall. Finally, it provides a quick recap of related investments for planning purposes.

List of Data Tables

1. Livability Index
2. Technology & Broadband
3. Arts Vibrancy
4. The Asset Inventory
5. Natural Assets – The Big Stuff
6. Recent Arts & Culture Funding
7. SEI READI Projects



Note to the Reader

SEI READI- or SIRPC-provided numbers may vary ones in this document when: 1) the counties assessed vary (6 vs 9); or 2) numbers lean on estimates for different years.



1. Livability Index (AARP, 2024)

	Regional Average		Union	Ohio	Reg Median Franklin	Reg Median Dearborn	Ripley	Switzerland	U.S. Median
Overall Score	50	=	55	52	51	49	48	45	50
1. Opportunity	72	+22	83	74	76	74	57	68	50
2. Environment	60	-1	65	64	64	42	61	64	61
3. Housing	57	-2	58	57	57	55	61	54	59
4. Engagement	45	-2	56	49	46	44	41	33	47
5. Neighborhood	41	+5	46	43	36	43	40	35	36
6. Transportation	40	-4	40	42	40	41	41	37	44
7. Health	35	-5	35	36	41	43	34	22	40



Green boxes highlight each county's highest score.

Pink boxes highlight each county's lowest score.

Plus/minus numbers under regional average are the difference between the region and U.S. overall.

Index Scores are based on 61 Indicators (including 40 metrics and 21 policies – details at [//livabilityindex.aarp.org/methods-sources/](https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/methods-sources/).)

	Opportunity	Environment	Housing	Engagement	Neighborhoods	Transportation	Health
METRICS	Income inequality Jobs per worker Age diversity Local government creditworthiness	Drinking water quality Regional air quality Near-roadway pollution Local industrial pollution Household transportation costs	Zero-step entrances Housing costs Housing cost burden	Broadband cost/speed Voting rate Social involvement index Cultural, arts, and entertainment institutions	Access to grocery stores/farmers' markets ... to parks ... to libraries ... to jobs by transit Destinations diversity Activity density Crime rate Vacancy rate	Local transit service freq. ADA-accessible stations and vehicles Walkability index Congestion Access to jobs by auto Speed limits Crash rate	Smoking prevalence Obesity prevalence Access to exercise opp. Healthcare prof. shortage areas Preventable hospitalization rate Patient satisfaction
POLICIES	State & Local Min. wage inc.	Local Plans Multi-hazard mitigation State Policies Utility disconnection Energy efficiency scorecard	State & Local Inclusive design laws Housing trust funds State Manufactured protections Foreclosure prevention and protection Acc. dwelling unit support	Municipal Laws LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination State Voter participation support laws	State & Local TOD programs	State & Local Policies Complete Streets State Human services transport coordination Volunteer driver policies	State & Local Laws Smoke-free

2. Technology & Broadband

This page provides additional detail aligned with the discussion on page 21.

Purdue University Center for Regional Development

	No Internet			Cell Data Only			Mobile Dev. Only			No Computing Dev.		
	2017	2022	Diff.	2017	2022	Diff.	2017	2022	Diff.	2017	2022	Diff.
Dearborn	17.6	8.3	(6.8)	6.8	10.5	3.6	8.9	12.8	4.1	12.3	7.6	(4.6)
Franklin	26.6	16.4	(10.2)	15.0	22.5	7.5	10.2	17.6	7.4	19.7	11.1	(8.5)
Ohio	23.8	14.7	(9.1)	12.3	12.0	(0.3) *	6.5	17.0	10.6	22.3	11.4	(11.0)
Ripley	21.2	14.4	(6.8)	11.2	17.2	6.0	9.2	16.9	7.7	15.8	10.4	(5.5)
Switzerland	30.6	23.6	(7.0)	13.7	18.3	4.6 *	13.7	21.8	8.0	22.8	18.2	(4.7)
Union	26.8	11.4	(15.4)	9.7	10.6	1.0 *	9.5	17.0	7.5	18.8	7.0	(11.7)
Regional Average *	24.4	14.8	(9.2)	11.5	15.2	5.7	9.7	17.2	7.6	18.6	11.0	(7.7)

<https://pcrd.purdue.edu/analyzing-indianas-digital-landscape-bridging-gaps-and-unveiling-trends-in-internet-access-and-device-usage/>

* Each of the differences measured in this study were deemed to be statistically significant EXCEPT for those with stars. Regional averages were calculated as part of this plan, not the underlying research.

Digging Deeper into Internet Benchmarks

Indiana

	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total
No Internet				
2017	19.5	17.3	24.5	20.2
2022	9.8	10.2	14.6	10.6
<i>Difference</i>	(9.7)	(7.1)	(9.9)	(9.6)
Cellular Data Only				
2017	11.7	8.5	4.5	8.9
2022	11.9	13.2	17.7	13.0
<i>Difference</i>	0.2	4.7	13.2	4.1
Mobile Devices Only				
2017	10.3	8.9	10.4	10.1
2022	17.6	15.9	17.9	17.2
<i>Difference</i>	7.3	7.0	7.5	7.1
No Computing Device				
2017	14.2	11.9	17.2	14.5
2022	6.9	6.8	9.8	7.3
<i>Difference</i>	(7.3)	(5.1)	(7.4)	(7.2)

United States

	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total
No Internet				
2017	16.2	18.7	24.7	17.6
2022	8.0	9.8	13.8	9.0
<i>Difference</i>	(8.2)	(8.9)	(10.9)	(8.6)
Cellular Data Only				
2017	6.9	8.1	10.5	7.5
2022	10.5	11.5	15.2	11.2
<i>Difference</i>	3.6	3.4	4.7	3.7
Mobile Devices Only				
2017	8.9	8.7	10.0	9.0
2022	14.1	14.8	17.4	14.6
<i>Difference</i>	5.2	6.1	7.4	5.6
No Computing Device				
2017	14.2	11.9	17.2	14.5
2022	6.9	6.8	9.6	7.3
<i>Difference</i>	(7.3)	(5.1)	(7.6)	(7.2)

[Analyzing Indiana's Digital Landscape \(January 2024\)](#)



Check out [A Practitioner's Guide to Rural Digital Inclusion](#)

Center for Rural Innovation Blog (October 8, 2025)

Rural communities must pair broadband expansion with affordable devices, hands-on training support, and AI literacy—to turn connectivity into jobs, entrepreneurship, and long-term local prosperity.

“Rural people need to see themselves as **creators** and not just consumers of technology.

Shaniqua Corley-Moore,
Head of Tech Talent Development at CORI

3. Arts Vibrancy (SMU DataArts, 2024)

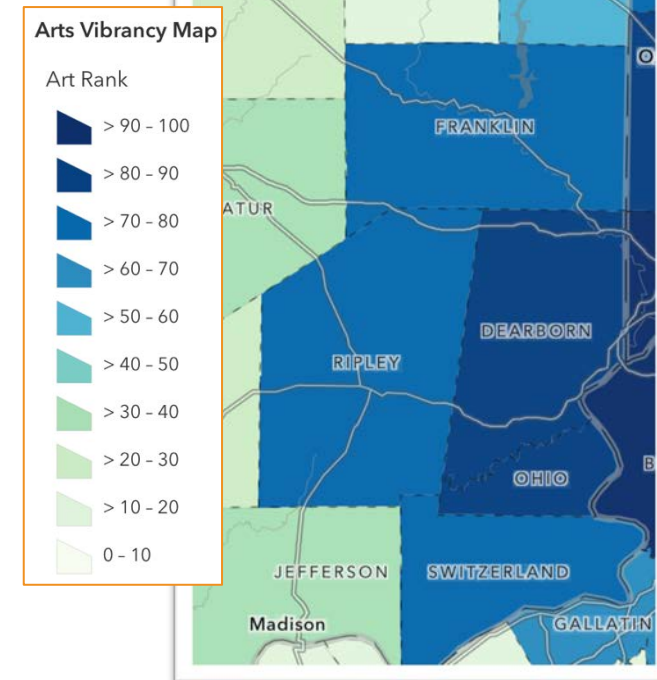
Some Indiana communities use the Arts Vibrancy Index in their benchmarking and communications. It is both an imperfect measure, particularly as it gives funding greater weight than arts organizations or activity. Even so it is useful in highlighting the differences among the region's counties. As such, it tells a compelling story of have vs have-not in arts vibrancy.

Indices (Percentile)	Dearborn	Ohio	Ripley	Switzerland	Franklin	Union
Arts Vibrancy	85	84	75	73	72	55
Arts Providers	69	74	45	61	41	63
Arts Dollars	87	89	72	72	58	49
Public Support	90	90	81	49	43	45

Source: <https://dataarts.smu.edu/ArtsVibrancyMap/>

<https://culturaldata.org/arts-vibrancy-2024/executive-summary/> and <https://culturaldata.org/arts-vibrancy-2024/methodology/>

Index scores show how a county performs relative to other counties nationally (3,143 counties) on a 0-100% scale. For example, a county scoring 85 would be performing better than 85% of other counties, while one scoring 15 would be performing worse than 85% of others. All measures are calculated on a per capita basis.



Variables & Weighting Used for Calculating Arts Vibrancy

WT	(aggregated at X level)	DESCRIPTION	SOURCES
21%	Arts Providers		US Census Bureau, IRS 990s
7%	Artists (zip code)	Freelance artists primarily engaged in performing in artistic productions, in creating artistic and cultural works or productions, or in providing the technical expertise necessary for these productions	
5%	Employees (county)	Number of employees (salaried and contract) by the museum, historical site, theater, dance, music, opera, and other performing arts sectors	
2%	Organizations (zip code)	Number of nonprofit organizations in the museum, arts education, community, dance, music, opera, performing arts center, orchestra, theater, multidisciplinary performing arts, or arts alliance and service organization sectors	
7%	Firms (zip code)	Number of arts, culture, and entertainment firms, weighted for size. Includes museums, theaters, dance companies, opera companies, music groups and performers, music producers and presenters, fine arts schools, and recording, motion picture, and video production companies	
22%	Arts Dollars		IRS 990s, SMU DataArts' Cultural Data Profile, Theatre Communications Group
3%	Program revenue	All revenue earned due to people participating in the activities of nonprofit arts and culture organizations *	
7%	Contributed revenue	All revenue from contributions to nonprofit arts and culture organizations (includes public funding) *	
7%	Total expenses	All expenses of nonprofit arts and culture organizations *	
5%	Total compensation	All payment to staff and artists by nonprofit cultural organizations *	
56%	Gov. Arts Support		National Endowment for the Arts, Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
12%	\$ State DOLLARS	All state arts dollar funding in the community *	
12%	# State GRANTS	Number of state arts grants awarded in the community	
11%	\$ Federal DOLLARS	All NEA and IMLS dollar funding in the community *	
10%	# Federal GRANTS	Number of NEA and IMLS grants awarded in the community	
11%	\$ Total Government	All government dollar funding in the community (federal, state, and local)	

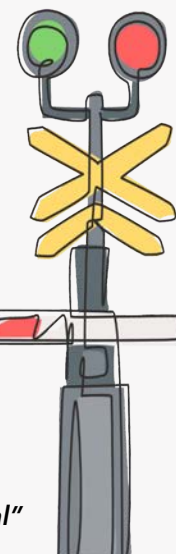
* Adjusted by a cost-of-living index

4. The Asset Inventory

Both the region and the individual counties will have received the complete cultural asset inventories as collected by the end of this work. They will also have access to mapped versions online via Felt.com. It is everyone's hope that local leaders will add to the inventories and maintain them over time; use them in planning, outreach, program delivery, and advocacy; develop public maps from them; and use them in implementation of this plan. The detail is included here for ease of access and as back up to numbers in the body of the document.

		D	F	O	R	S	U	Total
Art in Non-Art Spaces N = 55	Local art, in business	4	5	1	1	1	—	12
	Programs, in k12 or higher ed	—	1	—	—	—	1	2
	Programs, in local gov	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
	Programs, in non-art NPO	—	—	—	1	—	1	2
	Programs, in public library	4	2	1	4	1	1	13
	Venue, in bar etc.	1	1	2	6	1	1	12
	Venue in business	1	1	2	—	1	—	5
	Venue in church	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
	Venue, in k12 or higher ed	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
	Venue, in local gov	1	1	—	1	—	—	3
	Venue, in non-art NPO	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
Artist / Creative Industry N = 206	Artists, Coop/Guild	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
	Community Art Ctr/School	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
	Design, Various	3	—	1	—	2	6	12
	Folk/Traditional Arts	—	1	3	5	2	—	11
	Literary Arts, Author & Publisher	17	1	—	8	2	1	29
	Performing Arts, Dance	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
	Performing Arts, Music	—	1	1	5	1	—	8
	Retail, Books	1	—	—	1	—	—	2
	Retail, Fiber	2	1	1	2	1	1	8
	Retail, Framing	1	—	—	1	—	1	3
	Retail, Gallery	—	1	1	—	—	—	2
	Retail, Music	4	—	—	1	1	—	6
	Retail, Other	1	—	1	1	1	—	4
	Studio, Dance	1	—	—	2	—	1	4
	Studio, Music Mixing/Recording	2	—	—	—	—	1	3
	Venue (Music)	1	1	—	1	—	—	3
	Visual Arts	4	2	4	7	7	3	27
	Visual Arts, Ceramics	1	3	—	—	1	—	5
	Visual Arts, Fiber	2	1	—	2	1	5	11
	Visual Arts, Glass	1	1	1	—	1	1	5

WARNING



The cultural asset inventory is a compilation of as many of the arts and culture assets as possible within the project's desk research and crowdsourcing. **It is not about "regional" assets but rather assets in the region.**

It is incomplete, and that is okay. Errors are a byproduct. Almost by definition, any asset inventory like this will be incomplete. Information is always incomplete; someone is always moving; something is always changing. Someone (or several ones) will be missing and may even be wrong.

Readers may argue with categories. That's okay too. **The purpose is less about perfection than about identifying opportunity to build from.**

With that in mind, the cultural asset inventory should be considered **a living, working tool for communities and the region.**



		D	F	O	R	S	U	Total
	Visual Arts, Jewelry	–	–	–	–	2	–	2
	Visual Arts, Metal	–	–	–	1	–	–	1
	Visual Arts, Photography	11	8	4	6	1	2	32
	Visual Arts, Tattoo	1	–	1	–	1	1	4
	Visual Arts, Wood	2	1	–	1	4	–	8
Arts / Informal Group N = 18	Artists, Coop/Guild	1	–	–	1	–	–	2
	Folk/Traditional Arts	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
	Literary Arts	1	–	–	–	–	1	2
	Multidisciplinary	1	–	–	–	–	–	1
	Performing Arts, Music	1	2	–	–	–	1	3
	Programs, in k12 or higher	–	–	–	–	2	–	2
	Visual Arts, fiber	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
	Visual Arts, painting/drawing	3	–	–	–	–	1	4
Arts Nonprofits N = 21	Arts Council or Assoc, NPO	4	1	–	1	–	–	6
	Community Art Ctr/School	–	1	–	–	1	–	2
	Folk/Traditional Arts	–	–	–	1	–	–	1
	Performing Arts, Dance	1	1	–	–	–	–	2
	Performing Arts, Music	2	–	–	–	–	–	2
	Performing Arts, Theater	1	–	–	1	1	–	3
	Venue, Theater	–	–	–	1	1	–	2
	Visual Arts, Fiber	2	–	–	–	–	–	2
Former Asset N = 5	Visual Arts, Wood	–	–	–	1	–	–	1
	Venue, Theater	2	–	–	–	–	–	2
	Visual Arts	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
	Visual Arts, Photography	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
History & Heritage N = 92	Venue, Sculpture	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
	Historic Building/Site/NRHP	24	14	4	15	6	3	66
	Historic Society (not w/ Museum)	3	3	–	1	–	1	8
	Museum	4	–	2	6	5	–	17
Public Art N = 153	Other	1	–	–	–	–	–	1
	Barn Quilt	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
	Mural	25	13	23	24	7	7	99
	Other	1	2	–	4	2	–	9
Misc.	Sculpture	5	20	2	14	3	–	44
	Events & Traditions	22	20	11	17	7	7	84
	Civic	31	18	9	31	12	7	108

If the region or individual counties maintain their online asset inventories or maps, these numbers will continue to evolve.

Digging Deeper into Cultural Assets – What are they?

→ [Cultural Assets Can Be...](#)

PUBLIC ART

Murals or sculptures designed to enhance or beautify a space (usually not monuments without sculpture)

CREATIVE INDUSTRY

Artists earning income from their craft as a business (with an online or built presence) as well as for-profit entities like a gallery, design or architectural firm, musical group, etc.

ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

Nonprofits dedicated to the arts (e.g., museums, theaters, performance venues, arts councils, arts education entities)

HISTORY & HERITAGE

Historic sites and history-focused organizations (but usually not historic markers)

ART IN NON-ART SPACES

Places like bars, libraries, or parks that regularly host arts activities, creative groups, or rotating art displays

INFORMAL GROUPS

A collective that meets regularly, such as quilting circles or history clubs

EVENTS & TRADITIONS

Those signature gatherings, festivals, celebrations unique to every community

5. Natural Assets – The Big Stuff

Natural assets are a cornerstone of southeastern Indiana's identity and recreation. The detail is included as context for Goal 2 and Big Idea #1.

	Dearborn	Franklin	Ohio	Ripley	Switzerland	Union	Extends Beyond Reg.
Ohio River	X		X		X		X
• Laughery Creek (88.6 mi)	X		X	X			
o Bushing Covered Bridge				X			
o Triple Whipple (Laughery Creek) Bridge (1878)	X		X				
• Ohio River Scenic Byway & Extension (1992 and 2025)	X		X		X		X
Versailles State Park (9.5 sq mi) – 2ND LARGEST INDIANA STATE PARK				X			
• 3 Trails 1.5-2.75 miles in length				X			
• Versailles Lake (230 acre) & Dam				X			
• Fallen Timber Creek & Bridge				X			
Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge (2000, 78 sq mi, access to 6.25) – LARGEST OF 3 IN INDIANA				X			X
• Old Timbers Lake (145 acres), Collin's Ford Bridge, Marble Creek Bridge, Old Timbers				X			
Brookville Lake-Whitewater Memorial State Park Complex		X				X	
<i>Brookville Lake</i> (Reservoir) & Dam (1974) (8.2 sq mi)		X				X	
• 11 Trails 0.7-16.5 miles in length		X					
• Templeton Creek		X				X	
• Mounds State & Quakertown State Recreation Areas		X				X	
Whitewater Memorial State Park (1949) (36 sq mi)						X	
• 6 Trails 1-9 miles in length						X	
• Whitewater Lake (200 acre)						X	
Whitewater River (191 mi)	X	X				X	X
• Whitewater Canal (1836-47) (76 mi)	X	X					X
• Whitewater Canal Scenic Byway (2008, plus 3 loops 2011)	X	X		X			X
• Dubois Creek, Laurel Feeder Dam, Metamora Roller Mill, Duck Creek & Aqueduct		X				X	X
Other							
• Oxbow Inc. (1985) owning/protecting over 1,600 acres	X						X
• Historic Michigan Road Byway (2011)				X			
• Indiana's Historic Pathways (2004, national byway in 2009)	X			X			X
• Wolf Creek Habitat & Rescue		X					
• Red Wolf Sanctuary (1979), Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve (80.6 acres), & The Sunflower Field at Fox Farms			X				
Land Area (sq. mi., rounded)	307	391	87	448	223	165	Sum = 1,621 sq. mi
• Land + Water	305 + 2	384 + 7	86 + 1	446 + 2	221 + 3	161 + 4	= 1,602 + 19
• Forest Cover & Ranking Among Indiana Counties	47% #13	42% #18	48% #9	36% #27	52% #8	21% #46	= 41%

6. Recent Arts & Culture Funding State & Federal Grants *

One of the important stories to tell in this work is the wide variation in resources that have been available to each county in the region. This data makes that case from the perspective of government (state and national) arts grant programs.

Of the total funding, 80% came from covid-related programs. Only \$410,194 came from regular agency programs.

Grant Programs	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	Total
Indiana Arts Commission							
Ripley	\$14,071	\$10,356	\$7,062	\$19,464	\$16,691	\$46,201	\$113,845
Dearborn	\$6,383	\$8,383	\$7,228	\$12,255	\$9,822	\$15,814	\$59,885
Switzerland	\$5,000	\$4,164	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$7,800	—	\$26,964
Franklin	—	—	\$2,000	—	—	\$7,000	\$9,000
Ohio	—	—	—	—	\$5,000	—	\$5,000
Union	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ARPA & CARES via IAC							
Ripley			\$58,486	\$6,000			\$64,486
Dearborn			\$24,296	\$3,000			\$27,296
Franklin			\$25,858	—			\$25,858
Ohio			\$24,860	—			\$24,860
Switzerland			—	\$3,000			\$3,000
Union			—	—			—
Shuttered Venue Operators Grant							
Dearborn			\$1,570,503				\$1,570,503
Franklin			\$85,888				\$85,888
National Endowment for the Arts							
Franklin		50,000					\$50,000
Ripley		See Franklin					See Franklin
National Endowment for Humanities							
							None Identified
Institute of Museum & Library Services							
							None Identified
SEI READI Region Totals	\$ 28,454	\$ 22,903	\$1,811,181	\$ 48,719	\$ 39,313	\$ 69,015	\$2,019,585
	1.4%	1.1%	89.7%	2.4%	1.9%	3.4%	

* Counties may also have received arts related grants from other state or federal agencies and budgets that we did not research.

7. SEI READI Projects Completed, In Progress, or Approved

These details are included to continue to make those variations plain, while simultaneously highlighting projects (green rows) – already funded or complete – within the READI initiative that support goals or strategies in this plan.

Given the ongoing nature of this work, the status of projects or their numbers may have changed since this document.

			READI	Public	Private	Total	READI multiplier
1.0 IEDC							
Dearborn	Lawrenceburg	South Dearborn Regional Sewer	2,486,633	26,010,000	291,200,000	319,696,633	129
	Lawrenceburg	Liberty Theater	600,000	16,576,510	18,735,286	35,911,796	60
		North Dearborn Water Authority Expansion	3,070,000	3,278,089	300,000	6,648,089	2
	Aurora	Aurora Housing: Kopp Farm	215,000	1,602,455	—	1,817,455	8
Franklin	Brookville	Franklin County Sewer Extension for New Housing	4,464,107	—	36,000,000	40,464,107	9
	Brookville	Golden Road Infrastructure	250,000	250,000	864,000	1,364,000	5
Ohio	Rising Sun	Ohio Co Pop-up Pavilion	50,000	—	—	50,000	1
Ripley	Sunman	Sunman Sewer Extension	500,000	1,008,563	20,000	1,528,563	3
	Versailles	Versailles Pocket Park	86,000	111,962	220,006	417,968	5
	Milan	Milan Street Lights	100,000	6,550	40,000	146,550	1
Switzerland	Vevay	Switzerland County Workforce Housing	1,263,754	55,000	—	1,318,754	1
	Vevay	Switzer Square	346,128	880,726	50,000	1,276,854	4
	Vevay	Switzerland County TEC Center	100,000	187,040	37,700	324,740	3
Union	Liberty	Union County Water and Sewer Extension	200,000	1,100,000	—	1,300,000	7
	Liberty	Union County Historic Water Works	38,000	—	84,814	122,814	3
		Lil Patriots Preschool	—	—	—	—	—
Region	—	SEI Broadband Clearinghouse	102,978	139,800	—	242,778	2
	—	United Way Early Childhood Education	140,000	—	95,150	235,150	2
	—	SR 1 Corridor Plan	87,400	—	17,500	104,900	1
Region	—	Local Admin	450,000	—	—	450,000	1
State	—	State Admin	450,000	—	—	450,000	1
Totals			\$ 15,000,000	\$ 51,206,696	\$ 347,664,456	\$ 413,871,151	28

			READI	
2.0 IEDC				
Dearborn	Greendale	The Enclave of Greendale	2,000,000	
	West Harrison	I-74 West Harrison Business Park	250,000	
Franklin	Brookville	Home Grown Food Hub	200,000	
Ohio	Rising Sun	River Cities Housing & Commercial Development	1,500,000	
Ripley	Versailles	Southeastern Indiana Career Center	3,000,000	TBD
	Versailles	The Tanglewood	500,000	
	Osgood	Osgood Beautification Committee Infill Housing Prog.	400,000	TBD
Switzerland	Vevay	Switzerland County Housing 2.0	1,500,000	
Region	—	Local Admin	300,000	
State	—	State Admin	250,000	
Totals			\$ 9,900,000	

2.0 L.E.I. Blight				
Franklin	Brookville	Brookville Renovate to Eliminate	2,000,000	
Region	—			TBD
State	—			TBD
Totals			\$ 2,000,000	



			READI	Public	Private	Total	READI multiplier
ARI Batesville							
1.0		Kids Discovery Factory	1,000,000	1,000,000	3,000,000	5,000,000	5
		Skate Park	50,000	289,625	160,034	499,659	10
		Crestview Estates	100,000	100,000	28,200,000	28,400,000	284
		Lakeshore Village	500,000	500,000	65,000,000	66,000,000	132
		Ivy Tech Dual Credit Program	500,000	500,000	—	1,000,000	2
		Ivy Tech Welding Program	400,000	2,692,550	150,000	3,242,550	8
2.0		Arts & Innovation Hub	2,000,000	LEI \$500,000	5,967,066	8,467,066	4
		Industrial Park Road	2,000,000	1,100,000	30,000,000	33,100,000	17
		Trails & Gathering Space @ Margaret Mary Health	2,000,000	1,000,000	115,000,000	118,000,000	59
LEI Blight		Rural Schools Reimagined	TBD				
Totals			\$8,550,000	\$7,682,175	\$247,477,100	\$263,709,275	31

B. Methodology

1. Process

This plan emerged from a community-driven, asset-based approach to arts and culture planning. It used a wide range of engagement modalities including:

- **A Website** for transparency and to ensure that anyone in the region could participate.
- **Desk & Field Research** to collect and assess available information about the region.
- **Crowdsourcing** to fill gaps, connect with residents and encourage participation.
- **In-Person Engagement** to develop trust while truly listening to residents and leaders.
- **Deep Follow Up** to test ideas, explore new avenues, and develop the plan itself.

This ground-up approach, this allowed for deep and diverse participation across sectors and communities. Work progressed in three parts as depicted here.

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Pre-Work February – April										
Initial Meetings										
Key Assessment Interviews										
Logistics & Design										
Part 1 March – June										
Asset Inventories										
Doc. Review / Opportunity Research										
Analysis & Project Recs. from Doc.										
Part 2 May – October										
Visioning in Counties										
Focus Groups										
Steering Committee Work										
Synthesis & Drafting										
Project Coordination Ongoing										

Methodology Sections

1. Process
2. Engagement Summary & Detail by Interaction
3. Goal Prioritization Survey Results
4. Documents, Projects & Plans Reviewed

A Note on Batesville

1 City, 2 Counties, 2 READI Regions... But 1 Future

Batesville is the region's largest city. Its footprint lies primarily in Ripley County but crosses into Franklin County. The population is split roughly 75/25 between the two.

While both counties are included in the SEI READI region, the City of Batesville joined the Accelerate Rural Indiana region when it formed. This overlap led to a number of questions for this plan and its process.

In the end, all decided that there was no credible way to complete this plan without Batesville. From a process perspective that meant ignoring the regional overlap and including Batesville, its assets, its residents, and its needs just like any other city or town in the region.

The one exception to this was that the consultant teams for both regions remained in close conversation throughout to coordinate engagement efforts.

Specific tasks focused on the development of a forward-looking regional arts and culture strategy for Southeast Indiana that reflects the diversity and cultural aspirations of the region's residents. Using those tools and the principles on page 16 the process included:

- An inventory of existing arts, cultural, and creative assets
- Engagement with local artists, cultural institutions, local leaders, and the public
- Alignment with existing plans for assets, stakeholders, and strategic opportunities
- Facilitated sessions in each county to envision a vibrant, authentic future
- Follow up with focus groups, interviews, and benchmarking – testing and review
- Online survey for the region to prioritize and comment on vision, goals, and strategies

Readers may notice overlaps between the Arts & Culture Plans for SEI READI and Forge ECI. This was a product of the process and of the team's intent to have both plans speak to each other.

First, these adjacent regions share key elements of geography and history. As largely rural areas, they share challenges best addressed with like strategies. In fact, their regional development plans are similar as well.

Not only did the regions follow similar processes, but participants often shared the same ideas. This was true across all 14 counties in these regions. The creative sector in both share capacity needs – needs heard by all of the consulting teams across the state. The differences here came from the intensity and uneven impacts of those needs. When that is the case, best practices from the field take hold.

Most importantly, in drafting the plans we found them talking to each other. When we learned something in one region, it informed how we thought about the other. An idea heard in one was shared or tested in the other. Just as The Big Ideas amplify core goals in each plan, this dialogue amplified the good of regionalism across a larger footprint.

All of that said, there are significant differences between the plans. The regions start with different strengths, funding profiles, and density of arts and culture assets. After that, the nuance and details matter. They can be found throughout. Certainly, in the flavor of each region, its geography, its history, its leaders – its identity – and the big ideas that resulted.

Digging Deeper into Community Visioning

County by county and then together, this process asked the region to imagine a Vibrant Arts & Culture Future for itself. One that embraces an "Arts and" approach and through which Southeast Indiana's:

Arts & Culture have been Transformed with:

Resident engagement across boundaries, amenities that are accessible to the entire community, and a critical mass of authentic, yet bold, sustainable assets.

AND Have Transformed the Region in return – elevating quality of place across cities and towns

What emerged as Southeast Indiana's Vision for the Future describes 2035 where Arts are a Driving Force in Shaping a Thriving, Connected, & Resilient Region

What is a "Vision"?

“... a description of what it should look like once it has successfully implemented its strategies and achieved its full potential. This is [its] “vision of success.” **OR** ...“visioning” exercises... develop enough of a consensus on purposes and values to guide ... strategy formulation...

John Bryson. Strategic Planning for Public & Nonprofit Organizations (1995)

Inevitably, readers come to this with different expectations for a “vision.” We lean toward:

1. Success of Plan or “What will we have achieved?”
2. Ideal for the Future or “How __ should look when it is working extremely well” (Bryson)

2. Engagement Summary

In total, **over 230 individuals** participated in or provided information to the project including:

- Kickoff Webinar** 72 individuals participated live, and 34 viewed the recording at a later date.
- Community Visioning** 120 individuals participated in total across the region, 33% of whom were from the Creative Sector
- Other** Dozens reached out in other ways to ask a question or suggest an asset (e.g., emails, website contact forms, asset submissions, focus groups)
- Website** 150 unique visitors to project-specific pages
Any number of these may be in addition to the 230+ participants we tracked.
- Contact Generation** Along the way we expanded project contacts from <225 to >645. The final list included >34% arts and culture focused individuals. And the list – aka interest in this work – keeps growing. 75+ NEW emails came from the prioritization survey.

Breaking down that participation by county and by sector:

	Participation vs 2020 Pop	
Dearborn	28%	40%
Franklin	24%	18%
Ohio	8%	5%
Ripley	23%	23%
Switzerland	8%	8%
Union	4%	6%
Multi/Other	4%	--

Two members of the Indiana State Legislature also participated in the process.

* Other includes media, extension, and misc.

Sector	Participation
Arts, Culture & History	30%
City/County Government	16%
Libraries & Other *	14%
Foundations / Funders	9%
Chambers & Main Streets	6%
Economic Dev. & Related	5%
Tourism / Attractions	4%
Business & Manufacturing	3%
Education (K12 and Higher)	3%
Finance & Professional Services	2%
Health & Social Services	< 1%
Unknown	9%

Project Hope – Creating Hope Through Art, Lawrenceburg



Detail by Interaction

= count of events/items

N = number of participants/attendees

Personal	Digital
<p>Public (# = 6)</p> <p>Community Visioning Sessions <i>all from 4:30-6:30 pm</i></p> <p>Dearborn, Jun 12 Ivy Tech Riverfront Campus, Lawrenceburg (N = 21)</p> <p>Franklin, Jun 24 Franklin County Public Library, Brookville (N = 36)</p> <p>Ohio, Jun 11 Heritage Hall, Rising Sun (N = 17)</p> <p>Ripley, Jun 18 The Tanglewood, Versailles (N = 28)</p> <p>Switzerland, Nov 14 County Tech & Education Center, Vevay (N = 11)</p> <p>Union, Jun 4 Whitewater Valley REMC, Liberty (N = 7)</p>	<p>Webinar (# = 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Kickoff : May 2 (N = 72 + 34) <p>Website Interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — 138 Google Form Submissions from >20 — Numerous Website Contacts — Project-Specific Web Pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 150 Unique Visitors o 453 Sessions o 1,262 Page Views <p><i>Web analytics through 11/16/2025</i></p> <p>Prioritization Survey (# = 1, N = 128)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — N = 39 Dearborn — N = 33 Franklin — N = 8 Ohio — N = 34 Ripley — N = 10 Switzerland — N = 4 Union <p>Misc. (# = 2)</p> <p>Additional surveys in preparation for focus groups with tourism and arts leaders</p>
<p>Group (# = 7)</p> <p>2 Focus Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Tourism Leaders: Aug 13 virtual (N = 4) — Arts & Culture: Aug 14 virtual (N = 7) <p>5 Regional Leaders Discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Local Economic Development Group calls (#3): Mar 11 (N = 8), Oct 30 (N = 7), Jul 29 (N = 8) — Economic Development & Community Leaders: Apr 15 (N = 16) — Strategy Workshop: Aug 26, Versailles (N = 12) — SEI READI Board of Directors: Nov 6 and Dec 9 <p>Individual (# = 29)</p> <p>18 Arts & Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Dillsboro Arts, Franklin County Arts Council, SEIMA, Project Hope — Iron Timbers, musicians, visual artists — Damm, Liberty, and Historic Hoosier Theatres — Freudenfest — Hillforest House Museum, Musee de Vonage, Switzerland County Historical Society <p>6 Funders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Franklin, Ripley, Switzerland, and Union Community Foundations — Vevay-Switzerland County Foundation — Gilmore & Golda Reynolds Foundation <p>5 Local Government & Civic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Tourism (Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland) — Ripley Economic Development — Town of Versailles 	

3. Goal Prioritization Survey Results

Items were randomized in the survey to increase the quality of response.

VISION	5 Really Exciting!	4	3 Pretty Good	2	1 Needs Help	Score	N
Dearborn	15	11	10	—	2	4.0 79%	38
Franklin	12	9	7	3	—	4.0 79%	31
Ohio	3	1	2	—	—	4.2 83%	6
Ripley	13	10	6	2	—	4.1 82%	31
Switzerland	3	4	2	1	—	3.9 78%	10
Union	2	2	—	—	—	4.5 90%	4
Total Response	40% 48	31% 37	23% 27	5% 6	2% 2	4.0 81%	120
Balanced Score						4.10	

GOALS	1 Top	2	3	4	5	6	Rank	Score	N
Arrange in priority order, top = most important									
★ 1. Activate the Region	39% 49	25% 32	14% 18	9% 22	7% 17	6% 14	1	4.6	127
2. Connect Communities	12% 15	24% 30	17% 21	17% 22	13% 17	17% 22	2	3.5	127
3. Cultivate Next Generation Roots	9% 12	13% 17	17% 22	20% 26	20% 26	19% 24	5	3.2	127
4. Generate Creative Opportunity	13% 17	23% 17	19% 29	20% 26	20% 25	10% 13	3	3.5	127
5. Mobilize, Collaborate, & Communicate	17% 22	14% 18	15% 15	20% 25	18% 23	19% 24	4	3.4	127
6. Formalize Sustainable Commitments	9% 12	10% 13	17% 22	13% 16	21% 27	29% 37	6	2.9	127

STRATEGIES for...	1 Top	2	3 Bottom	Rank	Score	N
GOAL 1: Activate the Region						
★ 1. Amplify & Celebrate Distinct Assets	54% 49	46% 39		3	1.5	85
2. Activate with Public Art & Programming	24% 45	35% 66		2	1.4	85
GOAL 2: Connect Communities						
★ 1. Amplify & Activate Natural & Cultural Assets	57% 37	43% 28		1	2.3	65
2. Build Regional Tourism	43% 28	57% 37		2	1.4	65
GOAL 3: Cultivate Next Generation Roots						
1. Empower Civic Engagement	28% 27	40% 39	32% 31	2	2.0	97
★ 2. Expand Arts Opportunity	48% 47	21% 20	31% 30	1	2.1	97
3. Build Creative Career Pathways	30% 52	37% 65	34% 59	1	1.9	97
GOAL 4: Generate Creative Opportunity						
1. Empower Creative Capacity	30% 29	42% 41	29% 28	2	2.0	98
★ 2. Expand Access to Space for Creatives	37% 36	33% 32	31% 30	1	2.1	98
3. Grow Teaching & Learning	34% 33	26% 25	41% 40	3	1.9	98

STRATEGIES for...			1		2		3		Rank	Score	N
			Top				Bottom				
GOAL 5: Mobilize, Collaborate & Communicate											
1.	Mobilize Creative Networks		26%	27	47%	49	27%	28	2	2.0	104
2.	Expand Implementation Capacity		26%	31	31%	32	31%	30	2	1.8	104
★ 3.	Catalyze a Regionwide Arts & Culture Movment		44%	46	22%	23	41%	40	1	2.1	104
GOAL 6: Formalize Sustainable Commitments											
1.	Build Support for Arts & Culture Strategy		26%	49	39%	75	35%	68	2	1.9	94
2.	Build a Supportive Public Policy Infrastructure		26%	49	39%	75	35%	68	2	1.9	94
★ 3.	Secure Sustainable Funding		41%	72	29%	51	30%	53	1	2.1	94

BIG IDEAS...	1 Top		2		3 Bottom		Rank	Score	N
1. INDIANA'S MUSIC CORRIDOR	14%	15	58%	61	29%	29	2	1.9	105
2. INDIANA'S FOLK SCHOOL REGION	8%	8	28%	29	65%	68	3	1.4	105
★ 3. DISCOVER SOUTHEAST INDIANA ARTS & NATURE	78%	82	14%	15	8%	8	1	2.7	105

COMMENTS CODED BY TYPE		
Substantive	11	A few of the open-ended responses to this survey are embedded in the body of the document.
• Suggestions	5	
• Skepticism	4	
• Language Critique	2	
Supportive	12	All of the responses were provided to SEI READI as part of project documentation
• Simple Thanks	2	
• Thanks + Suggestion	4	
• Comment	6	
Total	23	

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS	Complete		Partial
Dearborn	39	30%	18
Franklin	33	26%	14
Ohio	8	6%	2
Ripley	34	27%	5
Switzerland	10	8%	3
Union	4	3%	3
N =	128		45

Comments re Vision

The 16 comments received can be categorized as follows:

5 Positive

- 4 praised the vision and its crafting
- 1 praised the vision but was skeptical re its achievability

5 Negative

- 2 thought it was too long or wordy
- 2 found it too buzzy or jargony
- 1 apparently misunderstood it as describing current conditions

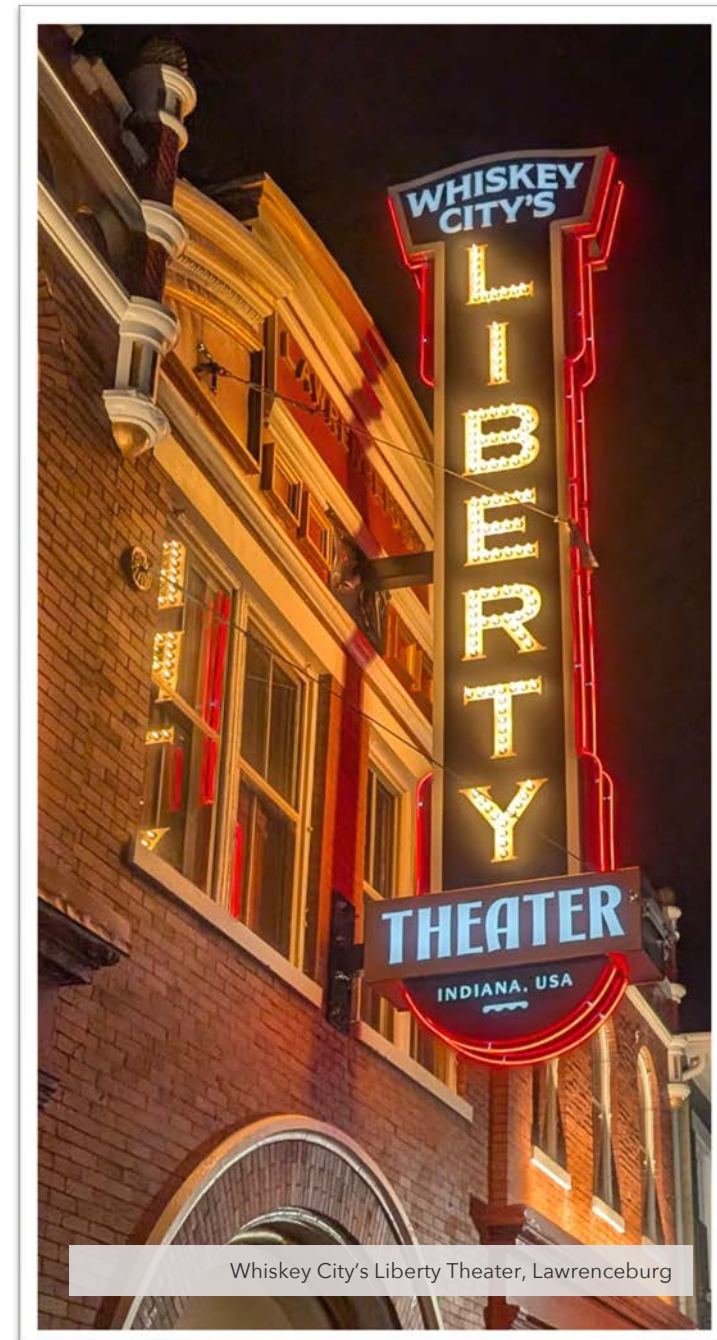
6 Neutral

- 3 emphasized the importance of one of the vision's parts
- 3 more made comments tied to goals or strategies
- 1 made a text suggestion (a word here or there)

4. Documents, Projects & Plans Reviewed

In addition to asset mapping and public engagement, existing plans in the community informed goals and strategies, including the following 33 documents and the same number again in tangential plans and studies:

Location	Year, Title, & Hyperlink
Dearborn	2024 One Dearborn Strategic Investment Plan
	2024 Greendale Economic Development Strategy
	2023 Dillsboro Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan
	2023 Dillsboro 5-Year Parks & Recreation Plan
	2023 Greendale Preservation & Main Street Development Plan
	2023 Greendale Trails Action Plan: Greendale Redevelopment Commission
	2022 Economic Contribution of Tourism in Dearborn County
Franklin	2021 Aurora River Town Review: Ohio River Recreation Trail Team
	2024 Batesville Downtown Visioning Plan
	2019 Pain Our Downtown: My Community, My Vision, Batesville, IN
Ohio	2024 Batesville Arts & Innovation Hub
	2025 Ohio County Strategic Investment Plan
Ripley	2024 Ripley County Community Foundation Strategic Plan
	2023 Sunman Comprehensive Plan
Switzerland	2024 Switzerland County GIFT VIII
	2023 Switzerland County Community Profile & Visioning
Union	2024 Comprehensive Assessment & Visioning
	2024 Union County GIFT VIII
	2022 Community Health Needs Assessment
	2020 Union County Comprehensive Plan
	2020 Union County Community Needs Assessment (GIFT VIII)
	2019 Town of Liberty Comprehensive Development Plan
SEI Region	See also County Document Repository https://ucdc.us/union-county-town-of-liberty-studies/
	2024 IU East Regional Business Confidence Index & East-Central IN Business Survey
	2023 Indiana's Rural Economic Development Model – I-74 Corridor Region + related
	2021 SEI Regional Development Plan and 2024 Update
	2023 State Road 1 Corridor Plan
See also Regional Document Repository https://www.sirpc.org/resources	



Whiskey City's Liberty Theater, Lawrenceburg

Location	Year, Title, & Hyperlink
State Arts & Culture	2024 Embracing a Culture of Creativity: IN's Overlooked Economic Engine (Study)
	2024-2028 Indiana Arts Commission Strategic Framework
	2023-24 Indiana Arts Commission Artist Needs Assessment
	2022 Planning with Arts & Culture: How Indiana Municipalities Are Utilizing... (Study)
	See also IAC Research Repository https://www.in.gov/arts/programs-and-services/research/
State Tourism	2024 Indiana Destination Development Corporation Strategic Plan
	2024 Indiana Destination Development Corporation Future Asset Study
	2024 Tourism at Work: The Impact of Travel & Tourism in Indiana (Study)
	See also IDDC Research Repository https://www.visitindiana.com/about-iddc/tourism-research/

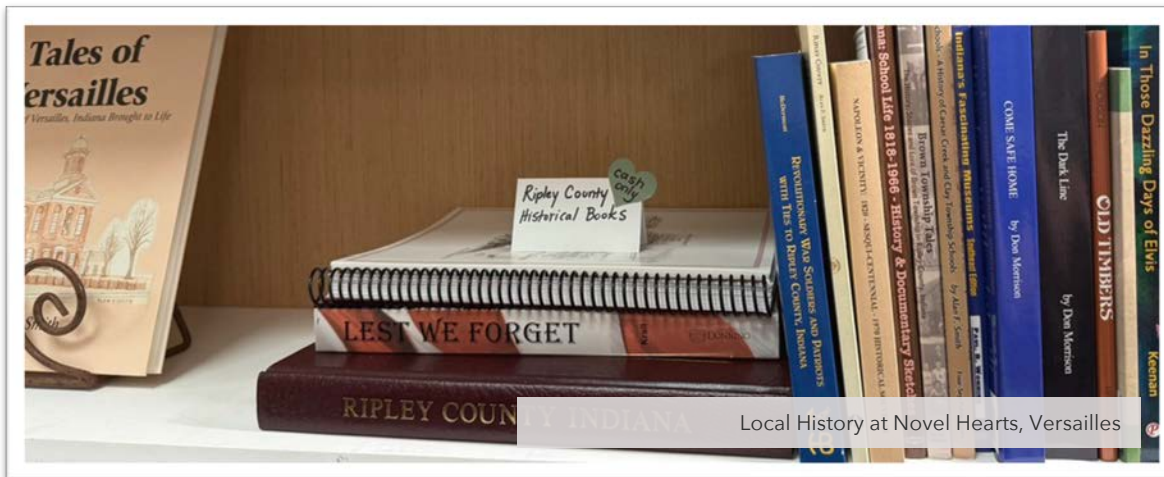


Image Credits

Cover, Hand drawn painting abstract art panorama background colors texture (#460628874), v.stock / stock.adobe.com
 page 63 "Small Decisions" Cartoon, Guy Downes, [available for purchase](#)
 page 114 "Careers in the Arts" Poster, [Vincent Hofer](#) (2024) for Arts South Dakota, [available for download](#)
 page 115 "We Believe in Art" Poster, [Sayuri Sasaki Hemann](#) (2019), [available for purchase](#)

Digging Deeper into Document Design

For those curious about the unusual colors or fonts in this document. It deliberately combines SEI READI's official branding / style guide with that of the consultant team as described here.

SEI READI

Designed by	Mike Pearleberg & Kiley Sparks
Header Font	Impact (Regular)
Accent Font	Impact (Regular)
Hex Colors	<i>Each with lighter/darker variations</i>
White	ffffff
Blue	102c5b
Green	1ad104
Green Gradient	1ad104 to 88e77d

TransformingCommunities.art

Designed by	Sara A. Peterson & Paige Sharp
Body Font	Avenir Next (Ultra Light, Reg, Med, & Demi Bold)

Special Thanks to Avery Eberle
 for design assistance along the way.



Why include this?

Because we want to walk the talk from the beginning – not just giving credit to the creators but making that credit transparent to all.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the hundreds of community members who participated in this process.

You took our calls, completed surveys, shared information, came to meetings, and beta-tested ideas.

Your communities graciously hosted us when we were in town. You made the plan happen!

Your commitment to community and to a **Vibrant Arts & Culture Future for Southeast Indiana** has been a joy to see.

Sara & Paige

Project Made Possible by –

Initiative Funder



Lilly Endowment Inc.

A private foundation since 1937

Initiative Partners

Jim Rawlinson
Indiana Economic
Development
Corporation



Miah Michaelsen
Indiana Arts
Commission



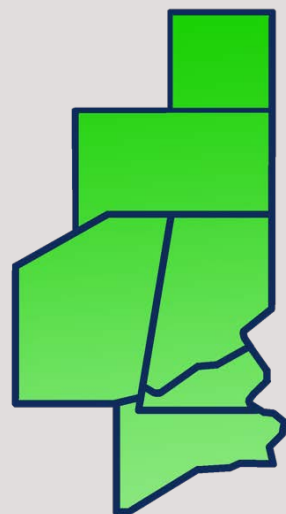
Consultant Team

Sara A. Peterson
dba Sara Peterson Consulting

in collaboration as

Paige Sharp
dba Sharp Visionarts





**SEI
READI**